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A Plain and brief Discourse on MICH. 6. 9.

By L. N. Philopatris.

Vexatio dat Intellectum.
The Rod and Reproof give wisdom, Prov. 29. 15. 22.

LONDON,
Printed for Walter Digby, Bookseller in Exeter,

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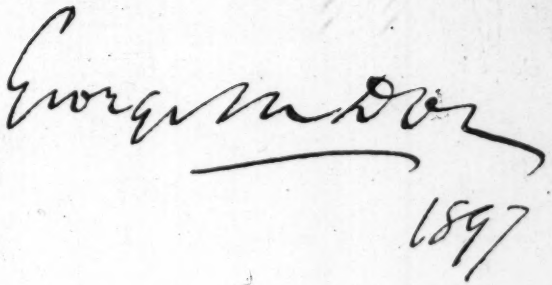

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BRITISH MUSEUM
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THE DEDICATION.

TO THE

Infinite, Eternal, and All-wise God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *L. N. His unworthy Servant and Steward of the* Sacred Mysteries *of his* Everlasting Gospel, *humbly devoteth these* First-fruits *of his Small things.*

Most Glorious, and Dread Sovereign,

WHo, or what am I, whom thou hast choſen to plead thy Controverſie, and to go, as an *Herauld* of War, before the Lord of Hoſts? Alas! *I am a*

Jer. 1. 6. *Child*; and the Work is too great for me. But, Lord, if thy poor *Stripling* must go; provide both the *sling* and the *stone*, the Word, and the Spirit; that this uncircumcised *Goliah* of Sin, which hath defied the God of the *Armies* of *Israel*, may fall before it. *Out of*

Psal. 8. 4. *the Mouthes of Babes and Sucklings, hast thou ordained strength; Even so, Father,*

Matth. 11. 26. *for so it seemed good in thy sight.* O, let it be according to thy Word! Lord, thou knowest, Thou hast put

put me on hard, yet happy work; Thou haſt ſet me in the place of *Dragons*; *Lions* are in my way; they are a ſtiff-necked (though thy own) People, unto whom thou haſt ſent me; Will they *believe, or hearken to thy Voice*! And now, Lord, what wilt thou do for thy poor *Servant*, that is willing to adventure to the utmoſt for thee? Thou knoweſt my Inſufficiency, and where my ſtrength lyeth; O, withdraw not thy hand, *Exod.* 4. 1.

even thy Right Hand, *but*
Psal. 144.7,8 *deliver me out of the great wa-*
ters, from the hand of strange
children, whose mouth speaketh
vanity, and their right hand is
a right hand of falshood; then
will I sing a new song unto
thee, O God. Be thou a
Mouth unto me, and I
will be a *Mouth* for thee.
Prepare my heart, guide
my pen, open my under-
standing; settle, sanctifie
and enlarge my judg-
ment; inspire my Soul
and set every *Power* of it
in tune; Fill my *Quiver*
guide my eye, and pro-
spe

ſper my hand! *Lord*, I have none to help me, none to protect me, no *Mecœnas*, but thy bleſſed Self, to fly for *Patronage*, and Refuge to; The Work is thine, wilt not thou own it? the Meſſage is thine, wilt not thou bear me out in it? Thou haſt ſent me; O ſend thine *Angel*, thy *Spirit*, thy *Preſence* with me! I do ſolemnly chooſe thee this day, for my all-ſufficient *Portion* and *Companion*, and the Shield of thy Grace, for my defence; Accept

both the *person*, and the *offering* of thy Servant; Suffer me to *imbowver* it under that golden *Wing*, from whence I desire to pluck my *Quill*. O let Him defend it, that at first inspir'd it, and who alone can, and will pardon the many faults of it; and then the Glory of all, which is his peculiar *Deodand*, shall be humbly presented Him, on the broken *Censer* of my *Heart*. Prosper thy Work in my hands; let me not return with my

Net

Not broken and empty; let me go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, so that I may come again rejoicing, bringing my *Sheaves* with me. The happy success of my labour and travel, is all the wages I look for, in this world; If thy Name may be glorified, thy People awakened and reformed, thy *ends* accomplished; I have what I aim at. O let me hit that mark, though I break my bow! let thy *Pills* work, though thou burn the paper they were

wrapt

wrapt in! *Lord!* whatever become of me, let it go well with thy Name, thy *Interest*, thy *Church* in the Earth!

Thou hast sent me, as once thou sentest *Jonas* to *Nineveh*; to proclaim the Lords *Warr*, and to plead with thy *People*; put words into my mouth, and cause the Inhabitants of the *Land* to hear. *Jer.* 5. 3. *Thou hast stricken us, but we have not grieved, thou hast consumed us, but we have refused to receive correction. The wayes* *Lam.* 1. 4. *of Sion do mourn; Her Adversaries*

versaries are the chief, her enemies prosper: for the Lord hath afflicted her. Jerusalem hath 8.
grievously sinned, therefore is she removed; all that honoured her, despise her. Her filthiness 9.
is in her skirts, she remembreth not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully. All 11.
her People sigh, they seek bread, they have given their pleasant things, for meat to relieve the Soul. Sion spreadeth forth her 17.
hands, and there is none to comfort her: the Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, that his Adversaries should be round about him: Jerusalem is as a

men-

menſtruous woman among them.
16. *For theſe things I vveep, mine eye, mine eye runneth down vvith vvater.*--- When ſhall
Iſa. 27. 9. *the iniquity of Jacob be purged? and this* be *all the fruit, to take*
Iſ. 10. 12. *away ſin; When* will *the Lord have performed his vvhole vvork upon mount Zion? Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the ſtreams in the South.* O ſuffer thy poor children to wreſtle with thee! Say not unto us, *Let me alone*: We cannot, we dare not, we will not let thee thus alone. Our hearts are breaking for thee; we know

know not what to do: we can do no leſs, we can do no more, than cry unto thee. O, remember thy Covenant, and what there hath paſt, and been mutually ſworn and ſealed to, between thy bleſſed Self and us, in the day of our *Eſpouſals*. Were we thine then, and are we not thine ſtill? Haſt thou repented of thy *Choice*? Didſt thou not know what we were, and whence we were, and how we would prove? *Lord*, have we deceived thee?

thee? and is the Relation void, unto which thou hadst adopted us in *Christ Jesus*? The Lord forbid! O suffer thy poor children to hold thee to thy word, which thou canst not, thou wilt not break. Let us call thee *Father* still, vvhatever be either our Offence, or our Affliction. Chastise us, so that thou vvilt but love us: let *Enemies* rise vvithout, so that *Enemies* may fall vvithin. Righteous Father, we complain not of thee, though vve thus com-

Hic ure, tunde, seca, modò in aternum parcas. Bern.

complain to thee. Thou haſt *nouriſhed, and brought us up*, but we *have rebelled againſt thee*. We are reaping our own harveſt; and drinking the wine of our own mingling. Time was, that we had the *Bridegroom* with us, and then we knew not what Weeping meant: We have been viſited with *our day*, a day of Peace; but we knew not the things of our Peace, in the day of our *Viſitation*. We heard thy *Voice*, thy ſweet, thy pleaſant *Voice*; but then

Isa. 1. 2.

We

vve had other things to do; The Flesh, the World, the Devil, our-cryed thee; *the bonds of Iniquity*, the chains of the *strong man* were upon us: But vvhen thou gavest thy parting knocks, and turn'dst the *Key* upon us, our hearts melted like vvax, and our Souls vvere filled vvith the Odours of thy *sweet-smelling Myrrh*. On this Scent, *Lord*, vve follovv hard after thee; vvhile our enemies, (*the VVatchmen that go about the City*) pursue

Cant. 5. 5, 7.

O, how long! how long! wilt thou *hide* thy ſelf in thy diſpleaſure? until we *acknowledge our offence, and ſeek thy face*? Lord, thou knoweſt, we freely *acknowledge* all that thou haſt pleaſed to convince us of; we *ſeek thy face*. And now, what doth the Lord require of us? *O, Why is his chariot ſo long a coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?* How long ſhall thy Beloved *lye among*

Hoſ. 5. 15.

Judg. 5. 28.

Pſal. 68 13.

the Pots? and thy children cry in vain? O, what is the Cloud that covers thee? Surely, 'tis no little cloud, that can hide so great a Presence; no small offence, that can provoke so patient, so indulgent a *Father*. Thou wilt not, thou canst not be angry, for trifles. Who, where is he, that hath been the Make-bate between us

Jon. 1. 7. *Come, and let us cast lots that we may know, for who*

cau

cauſe this evil is come upon us: Be it our *Benjamin*, a right hand, or a right eye, let it die, and let us be the Lord's *Bond-men*. This is the buſineſs, that is before thy ſervants: vve are come to caſt lots on our Selves, this day; that we may know, who, and what it is, that hath *troubled the Camp*. *Give a perfect lot*, make a convincing Evidence: though it be a *Jonathan*, he ſhall ſurely dye

1 *Sam.* 14. 39.

dye: be it a pleasant *Daughter*, an only child, that hath been wont to court us with *Tim-*
Judg. 11. 34,35. *brels and dances*, it shall be as the Daughter of *Jephthah*; For we have *opened our Mouth unto the Lord*, and vve *will not go back*. *Lord*, Wilt thou make a Covenant this day with thy Servants, that are unfeignedly willing to renevv their broken Covenant vvith the Lord their God? Shall it once more

more be ſaid, that the Lord delighteth in *England*? Wilt thou once more *betroth us to thy ſelf for ever? yea, betroth* us unto thee, *in righteouſneſs, and in judgment, and in loving-kindneſs, and in mercies, and in faithfulneſs*; Prune us, lop us, dig us, dreſs us, and then try us once more. O, vvhat a *Garden*? what a *Husbandry*? what a *Workmanſhip*, mayſt thou make of us? vvhat a *Temple*? vvhat a *Tower*, mayſt thou build to Hoſ. 2. 19.

thy great Name, in the midſt of us! hovv *Fair*! how *Beautiful* mayſt thou make us! Dear God! Once more! once more, try vvhat thou canſt do vvith, and for, poor *England*! O, let us once more

Cant. 4. 8. *look from the top of Amana, and Shenir, and Hermon, from the Lions dens, from the Mountains of the Leopards*, and *ſtay thy*

Iſa. 27. 8. *rough vvind, in* this *the day of the East-wind.*

And now, that thy vvrath

vvrath is gone out, and thy Plague begun among thy people; Suffer thy poor servant to take his *Censer*; let thy Spirit put on *fire from the Altar*, and thy dear Son, my dearest Saviour, put on *Incense*, and so let him be one of those that *stand between the dead and the living*; to turn away thy vvrath from *Israel*. Accept of his pleading with Thee, and give success to his pleading with Man; That thy Numb. 16. 46, 47, 48.

Rod may not leave us in our Ruins, nor in our Sins. Lord, thou haſt us now on the *wheel*, mayeſt thou not novv faſhion us on vvhat mould thou vvilt! Thou haſt us in the *Furnace*, mayeſt thou not make of us vvhat thou pleaſeſt? Thou haſt us in the *Nets*, mayeſt thou not bind us to what thou wilt? Thou haſt found us in our *Month*; vvilt thou novv take the advantage on us, and

and bring us to thine ovvn terms? *O Lord, Spare Jeruſalem!* and *ſee it a quiet habitation.* Say unto *England, Thou ſhalt be a Crovvn of Glory, in the hand of the Lord, and a royal Diadem in the hand of thy God; thou ſhalt no more be termed, Forſaken; neither ſhall thy Land any more be termed, Deſolate; but thou ſhalt be called Hephzibah, and thy Land Beulah: For the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy Land ſhall be married. Look down from Heaven,* Isa. 62. 3, 4.

and

Isa. 63. 15, 16, 17. *and behold, from the Habitation of thy Holineſs, and of thy Glory: Where is thy zeal, and thy ſtrength; the ſounding of thy bowels, and of thy Mercies towards me, are they reſtrained? Doubtleſs, thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Iſrael acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlaſting. O Lord, why haſt thou made us to err from thy from thy wayes? and hardned our heart from thy fear? Return, for thy Servants ſake, the Tribes*

of

of thine Inheritance, for thy Mercies ſake for thy great Name's ſake, for thy Covenant's ſake, for thy Chriſt's ſake, return, return. Even ſo Lord! Amen! Amen!

TO THE READERS.

Brethren,

MY hearts desire, and Prayer to God, for *Israel*, is, that it might be saved. *In order vvhereunto, I have cast in this my Mite; as so much* Nitre, to wash your hearts from wickedness.---For the Voice declareth from *Dan*, and publish- Rom. 80. 1. Jer. 4. 14.

lisheth Affliction from Mount *Ephraim*. *Will the Lord ſanctifie it, and ſeparate it unto this end! I have been mending my broken* Nets, *and now this once more, I come to* Shoot Scene; *the Lord bleſs the* Venture. *I intend not to hold you here; my Meſſage to you is in that which followvs. If you ſeek for my Apology,* 1 Cor. 9. 6. *you may find it.* For Neceſſity is laid upon me; yea, Wo is unto me, if I preach not the Goſpel. *The ſtyle indeed*

is

is plain, and unpoliſht; Fancies *and* Flourishes *become not our* mourning Weeds. *If thou art a* Mourner in Zion, *thou canſt not take it amiſs, to ſee a* Text *cloathed in* Sackcloth. *I have nothing here to ſtay your eyes, for my Errand is to your Hearts*; *at theſe doors* I *am come to knock, the* Word *knocks, the* Rod *knocks, the* Spirit *knocks*; Open to me, my Siſter, my Love, my Dove, my Undefiled, for my head *Cant.* 5. 2.

is

is filled with the dew, and my Locks with the drops of the Night. 'Twas the Rich mans vain Requeſt, *Luke* 16. 27. That one might be ſent *from the Dead, to vvarn his brethren*; and 'twas denyed him; but (in a ſence) granted you: God hath ſent you a Meſſenger from *the* Dead; a *Dry Bone*, to plead vvith you; O, Let the Dead praiſe the Lord on your account, ſo shall our dry bones

bones live; *For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.* Remember! He that now calls you, will shortly arraign you, when *Hills and Mountains* shall not hold you, nor hide you; He that now entreats you, shall shortly Judge you, when these things shall be recognized, and more fully, and convincingly debated. *Knowing therefore the terrour of the Lord, we perswade men.*

1 Thess. 3. 8.

Luk. 23. 30.

2 Cor. 5. 11.

And, O Sirs! be perſwaded. *God's twenty thouſands*, will be too hard for your *ten thouſands*: The Armies of His Judgments are up; His Bloody Colours are in the Field, and the Cruel, Unhappy Battel is begun; yet you may have Quarter, yet you may have your Lives, your Liberties, your Peace, and that on honourable terms. The Lord move you?

Luk. 14. 31.

you! turn you! ſave you! So prayes, and ſo will pray,

The Unworthieſt of thoſe that ſerve you, Or ſuffer for you in the Faith,

L. N.

Ab Eremis meis,
Aug. 28. 1666.

The *Synopsis*, or Ἀνατομὴ of the whole Ensuing Discourse.

Parts. { *The Warning of the Rod.*
{ *The Author of the Rod.*

From the Scope.

Doct. *THat when a People, or Person, are come to a formal resting in the external part of Ordinances, 'tis time for God to take up his Rod.*

From the leading words of the Text,

Doct. 1. *That the Lord is not wont to steal a Rod on his People, but gives them fair, and loud warning.*

Doct. 2. *That the Voice of Gods Messengers, is Gods own Voice.*

From the words themselves.

Doct. 1. *That the People of God ought to be sensible, not only of the Rod it self, but of the fore-warnings of an approaching Rod.*

Doct. 2. *That the Afflictions wherewith God exerciseth his People, are but Rods.*

Doct. 3. *That there is no Affliction can light*

on the People of God, without his Divine permission and appointment.

Doct. 4. *That the Lords Rod is no dumb Rod.*

1. Doct. 1. *Proved from Scripture.*

2. The Symptoms of an approaching Rod.

1. Drawn from God.

1. *The packing up of his Jewels.*
2. *The withdrawing his presence.*
3. *His crossing the course of Nature.*
4. *A gradual beginning of Judgment.*
5. *The joint-cryes of the Prophets.*

2. Drawn from Man.

1. *When Sin is on the thriving hand.*
2. *When Gods worship is prophaned.*
3. *When Professors lose their zeal.*
4. *When Charity among brethren is dying.*
5. *When solemn Covenant-breaking lies unrepented of.*
6. *When those sins, for which God hath taken up the Controversie, are not removed.*

3. How far we our selves are under the Symtoms, or strokes of this Rod. Examined by the fore-mentioned Symptoms.

Doct. 1. proved by Argument.

1. *'Tis the best way to prevent the coming of the Rod.*
2. *It will arm thee for the coming of the Rod.*
3. *It will argue thy care to please God.*

Use 1. *This reproves,*

1. *Such as will not acknowledge God in the Rod.*

God

God is to be acknowledged,

1. *In his Providence.*
2. *In his Sovereignty,*
3. *In his Juſtice.*
4. *In his ends.*

2. *Such as will believe no further than they feel.*

3. *Such as ſlight any thing whereby God manifeſts his diſpleaſure.*

Uſe. 2. *This exhorts,* To ſit down and count what it may coſt to get to Heaven.

Motives.

1. *Within a few moments more, all the merry dayes of the wicked, and all the ſad hours of the righteous, ſhall be over.*
2. *The perſevering Chriſtian, is the only bleſſed Chriſtian.*
3. *As tall Cedars as thou art, have fallen, and are daily falling.*
4. *Is there not enough in Hell, to ſoure all thy preſent Comforts? and enough in Heaven, to ſweeten all thy preſent Croſſes?*

Directions.

1. *Take heed of over-prizing the World.*
2. *Clear up thy aſſurance of Gods good-will to thee.*
3. *Examine and prove the ſtrength of thy Graces.*

Doct. 2. proved, That they are Rods, and but Rods.

1. *They are ſo called in Scripture.*

2. *God useth them to no other end.*
3. *God deals with the Instruments, as with Rods.*

Demonstrated what Rods they are.

1. *In themselves; they may be,*
   1. *Sharp rods.*
   2. *Long rods.*
   3. *Strong rods.*
2. *With Relation to our Sins; they are,*
   1. *Short rods.*
   2. *Light rods.*
3. *With respect to Gods ends in them, they are,*
   1. *Teaching rods.*
   2. *Establishing rods.*
   3. *Comforting rods.*
   4. *Feeding rods.*
   5. *Improving rods.*

Use 1. This informs, The wicked are deceived.
1. *In themselves.*
2. *In the people of God.*

Use 2. This exhorts; Let the people of God then,
1. *Bear the rod.*
2. *Kiss the rod.*
3. *Improve the rod.*

Use 3. This comforts the Afflicted children of God.
1. *It proves their Adoption.*
2. *It seals to their Portion.*
3. *It works for their Good.*

Doct. 3. &c.

Doct. 4.

Doct. 4. The Doctrine prov'd from the Text.

1. *God calls for Audience to his Rod.*
2. *It is the rod of Gods own designment.*

Motion prov'd.

1. *To glorifie his Attributes.*
2. *To reach his Ends.*

For the understanding this Voice, is premised,

1. *When God speaks to us by his Rod; he speaks as to rational Creatures.*
2. *We must examine Conscience by the word of God.*
3. *Though the Rod may be general, yet the Voice is particular.*
4. *We must go to God to interpret it to us.*

The Voice of the Rod in general.

1. *It calls on us to awake, and consider,*
   1. *Our Spiritual Estate and Relation.*
   2. *Our wayes and carriage toward God.*
      1. *Our Sins, with their Aggravations;*
         1. *Sins of Nature.*
         2. *Sins of Omission.*
         3. *Sins of Commission.*
      2. *Our Duties.*
         1. *The Principle of them.*
         2. *The Rule of them.*
         3. *The Ends of them.*
      3. *Our Graces.*
         1. *The truth of them.*
         2. *The growth of them.*
      3. *Gods wayes, and carriage towards us.*
      4. *What he aims at in us, and expects from us.*

2. It

2. *It calls for an universal Reformation.*
   1. *Of the Subject.*
   2. *of the Object.*
3. *It calls us to humiliation.*
4. *To stir up our selves to lay hold on God.*
5. *To renew our Covenant with God.*
6. *For something extraordinary.*

The Voice of this Rod in special.

1. *To the Church, and People of God, and therein,*
   1. *To the Angels, or Ministers of it.*
   2. *To the particular Societies of it.*
      1. *What ingaged you in such a Society?*
      2. *what hath been your carriage under such a Relation.*
         1. *Towards your Teachers and Rulers.*
         2. *Towards one another.*
         3. *Towards them that are without.*
      3. *To the Individual Members of this Church.*
         1. *How have you improv'd your Talents?*
            1. *Have you considered what they are?*
            2. *whose they are?*
            3. *Why intrusted with you?*
            4. *what hath been your esteem of them?*
            5. *what hath been your care about them?*

6. *what*

6. what hath been the encreaſe of them?

1. Your Time, which is the more precious, becauſe,
   1. 'Tis borrowed time.
   2. 'Tis ſhort.
   3. 'Tis uncertain.
   4. 'Tis the time of Gods Patience.
   5. 'Tis the time of our Viſitation.
   6. 'Tis a determined, ſet time.
2. Your Parts and Gifts.
   1. How low are they of what they might have been?
   2. How little hath God had of them?
3. Your Graces,
4. Your Duties.
5. Your Company.
6. Your Priviledges.
   1. Temporal.
      1. Health.
      2. Peace.
      3. Plenty.
   2. Spiritual; and theſe are,
      1. External.
         1. Our Miniſtry.
         2. The Sacraments.
         3. Good Books.
      2. Internal.
         1. Convictions.

2. Re-

2. *Resolutions.*
3. *Vowes.*
4. *Comforts.*
7. *Your Afflictions.*
8. *Your Relations.*

2. *How have you kept your watch?*

In a good Watchman there must be,

1. *Discretion.*
2. *Courage.*
3. *Vigilancy.*
4. *Faithfulness.*

What we are to watch for.

1. *For Gods Glory.*
2. *For our own Salvation.*

And in order to both these,

1. *For the word of God.*
2. *For the Spirit of God.*
   1. *The Teachings of it.*
   2. *The Quicknings of it.*
3. *For all opportunities of doing, or receiving good.*

What we are to watch against.

1. *Against Sin.*
   1. *In the Fountain of it.*
   2. *In the Acts of it.*
   3. *In the Temptations to it.*
   4. *In the occasions of temptations.*
2. *Against Satan.*
3. *Against Self.*
   1. *Self-application.*
   2. *Self-relyance.*
   3. *Self-attribution.*

4. *Against*

4. *Againſt the world.*
   1. *The Fears of the world.*
   2. *The Flatteries of the World.*
   3. *The hopes of the world.*
   4. *The Scorns of the World.*
   5. *The Perſecutions of the world.*
   6. *The Cares of the world.*

5. *Againſt Death.*

Reaſons. 1. *Becauſe they are Enemies.*
   2. *Mortal Enemies.*
   3. *Spiritual Enemies.*
   4. *Conſtant Enemies.*
   5. *Mighty Enemies.*

2. *To the Enemies of God.*
   1. *It aſſures them, that they are miſtaken in God.*
      1. *In his Holineſs.*
      2. *In his Juſtice.*
      3. *In his Mercy.*
      4. *In his Patience.*
      5. *In his delight in, and care of, his People.*
      6. *In his glorious Title of* Hearing Prayer.
      7. *In his Ends and deſigns.*
   2. *It calls on them, to conſider; and, on conſideration, to repent.*
   3. *It tells them, that the Dregs of the Cup are like to come to their ſhare.*
   4. *It aſſures them, that God will be too hard for them.*

5. *It*

5. *It fore-warns them, that God is making ſhort work with them.*

Rules to diſcover the *particular* meaning of this or that *particular* Rod.

Motives to the Duty.

1. *'Tis an excellent way to gain by the Rod.*
2. *'Tis a notable courſe to make the yoke eaſie.*
3. *'Tis a ſpecial means to improve Experience.*
4. *'Tis the only way to have the Affliction removed, with ad-advantage.*

The Rules.

1. *Conſider, what were thy laſt miſcarriages?*
2. *what are the eructations of Conſcience?*
3. *Sometimes the puniſhment bears ſome reſemblance to the Sin.*
4. *It may be, God afflicts for prevention.*
5. *What is thy patience under the rod?*
6. *It may be God is but trying of thee.*
7. *Go, and ask it of God by Prayer.*

Uſe. 1. This informs of a threefold Miſtake.

1. *Such as queſtion God's Providence.*
2. *Such as transferr the Cauſe of the Rod from themſelves.*

3. *Such*

3. *Such as apply themſelves to indirect means.*

Uſe 2. of Exhort.

Motiv. { 1. *If you will not have the Rod, you ſhall feel the Rod.*
2. *If you will thus hear it, you ſhall be ſure of ſtrength to bear it.*

Uſe 3. of Exam. 1. *Your ends in deſiring the removal the Rod.*
2. *what good the Rod hath wrought on you.*

Uſe 4. Lament. 1. *That we ſhould thus provoke God.*
2. *That we are no more ſenſible of it.*
3. *Lament your poor poſterities.*

THE

THE VOICE OF THE ROD;

OR

God's Controverſie, pleaded with Man:

BEING

A Plain and Brief Diſcourſe on

MICH. 6. 9.

Hear ye the Rod, and who hath appointed it.

I Shall not hold you here with any troubleſome *ſpeculations* by way of Introduction; onely ſo farr, as I humbly conceive neceſſary to help your underſtandings in ſo plain and important a *Concern.*

It ſeems that God had then a great Controverſie with his *People*, which he ſtirrs up the Prophet to plead in his name and behalf, *verſ.* 1. *Ariſe, contend thou before the Mountains, and let*

the Hills hear thy voice; ver. 2. *For the Lord hath a Controverſie with his People, and will plead with Iſrael.* ver. 3. *O my People! what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Teſtifie againſt me.* With what melting Compaſſions doth God begin with them! how doth his bowels yearn upon them! *O my People!* Though they be a ſinful people, yet they are my people.

Obſerv. And this is one diſtinguiſhing Priviledge, and ſingular Comfort of the people of God; Though he do correct them, yet he will not caſt them off, though he may *diſtreſs* them, yet he will not *divorce* them: *What have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? teſtifie againſt me.* O the wonderfull condeſcention of the great God! how pathetically, familiarly, convincingly doth he expoſtulate with his children? *What have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee?* Jer. 2. 5, 31. *What iniquity have your Fathers found in me? have I been a wilderneſs unto Iſrael? a land of darkneſs?* what can you charge me with? let us hear it: *teſtifie againſt me.* Ver. 4. *I brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the houſe of ſervants, and I ſent before thee Moſes, Aaron, and Miriam.* And is this the wrong you complain of? hath my patience, my goodneſs, my mercy, my wiſdom, my power, (which have ever ſtood engaged for you) abuſed you? ver. 5. *O my people! remember now what Balaac King of Moab conſulted, and what Balaam the ſon of Beor anſwered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteouſneſs of the* Numb. 22.

Lord,

Lord. Remember how I trod down your enemies before you, and brake all their ſnares for you, and owned you ſtill in all your ſtreights, in all your wants, in all your fears, and under all your provoking unkindneſs and unthankfulneſs: And is this my unrighteouſneſs now? and that wherein I have wearied you?

God having thus juſtified himſelf, their own conſcience and experience being witneſs; In the next place we have their ſtrange Reply: ver. 6. *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow my ſelf before the high God?* See the frowardneſs and fooliſhneſs of their anſwer; much like the language of that wicked and ſlothful ſervant, *Matth.* 25.24. *I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou haſt not ſown. q.d.* Why, we know not how to pleaſe thee, thou art alwaies chiding, alwaies finding fault, and ſeeking occaſions againſt us, every thing is naught that we do, our very *Incenſe is an abomination.* Why, *Isa.* 1. what wilt thou have of us? ver. 7. *Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams? or with ten thouſand rivers of oyl? ſhall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?* a flat impoſſibility on the one hand, and a foul impiety on the other; Could they ever imagine that this ſhould be a probable way to attone him? The truth is, it looks like an horrible imputation on the Juſt and Holy God; but that Charity ſuggeſts, it was not their *profeſſed*, but their *interpretative* language, not of their lips, but of their lives. And hence we may obſerve, *That it is the courſe and the character of* *Obſerv.* 1.

an hypocritical People or Person, to think to make up that with the labour, which is wanting of the life of Religion. And farther, *That it is the subtilty and ambition of the Devil, to mix his own Immolations and super-erogations with Gods Institutions.* But I must not insist here.

See now how mildly God replies again, v. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* These words contain both the Tables of *Moral* duty: and therefore he sayes, *he hath shewed thee what is good*, what is simply, *per se*, κατ' ἐξοχὴν, or morally, good. 'Tis true, Sacrifice and Ceremonies were good *intra suam sphæram*, if observed and performed according to their divine Institutions; good, *pro tempore, & virtute* Matth. 23. 23. *mandati*: but not *virtute propriæ naturæ. These things ye ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone*; Therefore, *the Lords voice cryeth unto the City,---Hear ye the Rod, &c.* God hath these two great, standing, visible Ordinances, to reclaim his people, his *Word*, and his *Rod*: and when one of these will not do, the other must. Such is the care of our heavenly Father, that he will not lose a *hoof* or a *hair* of his children, what ever it cost him or them; if the gentle gales will not send us to shoar, his rougher storms shall.

The Lords voice cryeth unto the City,---But why to the City? 1. The City is the representative head of the whole *Political* body, therefore the voice is directed to the City; as in our common discourse, the voice is directed from face to

face.

face. 2. The *City* is the Countrie's admired *Sampler* or Copy, in respect of manners and practice; as the *City* is, so, for the most part is the Country about it, and by this means first or most in the transgression. 3. The *City* hath usually the fairest advantages and encouragements to serve and worship God, and to promote the beauty and power of godliness. 4. *Cities* are apt to look big upon their own strength, riches, and fortifications; therefore the *City* is alarm'd by name, that they may know that their fig-leaves will not hide their guilt, nor secure their peace against the strokes and strength of the Lords Rod.

And the man of wisdom shall see thy Name. I need not, I shall not acquaint you with all the *Versions* of this *Phrase*; *And thy name shall see what it is*, say some Translations, (*nam quod res est videt nomen tuum. Beza.*) καὶ σώσει φοβουμένους τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. *Septuag.* The scruple deserves not many words: among many varying translations, the sense comes near to one. *Thy Name*; this is spoken by a *Metonymia Adjuncti*, for the thing or person named, a very common and usual *Trope* in Scripture; and it hath relation by a *Mutatio personæ*, unto the Person exprest in the precedent clause, *The Lords voice cryeth,--- And the man of wisdome shall see*, τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. *The man of wisdom.* The word signifies, as the Learned observe, *substantial wisdom*; therefore *Beza, quod res est*: The truly, substantially wise, the Godly man, shall see, submit to, and tremble at thy great Name; φοβήσει τὸ ὄνομα σοῦ. So that you may take the words, either as a Precept, or as a

Promiſe: As a *Precept*, to ſee and acknowledg God in all his *Ordinances*, and in all his *Providences*, with this argument, that it is the onely wiſe courſe, and both the property and character of a truly wiſe man. As a *Promiſe*, that there ſhould be ſome on whom this ſpirit of wiſdome ſhould reſt; and for whoſe ſakes, by conſequence, God would ſhorten and make up the controverſie.

Hear ye the Rod, and who hath appointed it. Theſe words are the ſumme and tenour of the Lords voice to the *City*: wherein you have,

1. *The Warning of the Rod.*
2. *The Author of the Rod.*

In the *warning* you have a dutie, *Hear*; which in Scripture is taken for acknowledging, ſubmitting, or obeying: With the *Author* you have the authoritative decree, or determination; *who hath appointed it?*

From this *Analyſis* we may obſerve,

Firſt, from the Scope:

Doct. 1. *That when a People or Perſon are come to reſting in the external and ceremonious part of duties or ordinances, it is time for God to take up his rod.* This was the caſe here. *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow my ſelf before the high God? ſhall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old?* which argues their reſting here, and that their Religion had no higher principle nor aim than theſe *beggarly elements*; therefore *hear ye the rod.*

2. 2. From the leading words of my Text, *The Lords voice cryeth unto the City*, Obſerve,

Doct. 1. *That the Lord is not wont to ſteal on a rod up-*

on

on his people, but gives them fair and loud warning of it.

That the voice of Gods Messengers is the Lords own voice. Doct. 2.

3. From the words themselves, *Hear ye the Rod, &c.* observe; 3.

That the people of God ought to be sensible, not only of the rod it self, but of the forewarnings of an approaching rod. Doct. 1.

That the afflictions wherewith God exerciseth his people are but rods. Doct. 2.

That there is no affliction can light on the people of God, without his divine permission and appointment. Doct. 3.

That the Lords rod is no dumb rod. Doct. 4.

We shall begin with the first, from the words, *That the people of God ought to be sensible, &c.*

This I shall first prove from Scripture. 2. Shall shew you some tokens of an approaching rod. 3. How farr we our selves are under the symptoms and strokes of the rod. 4. Shall evince the dutie by Arguments. 5. Apply it briefly.

1. For Scriptures, see *Jer.* 3. 7, 8, 10. What a sad complaint does God take up over *Judah* on this very account? *when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed Adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.* Though God had threatned them, not with words only, but with blows, and had set the legible and bloudy characters of their own doom before their eyes; yet all was too little to convince them of their own

approaching miserie. *Ezek.* 33. 4, 5. *Then whosoever heareth the sound of the Trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come and take him away, his bloud shall be upon his own head; he heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning, his blood shall be upon him; but he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.* Pro. 22. 3. *The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on and are punished,* I need not heap up witnesses to evidence so rational and undeniable a truth.

2. But you will ask me, How shall we know when a rod is coming?

I shall answer in these two generals.

1. Something may be gathered from God.

2. Something from Man.

From God; as,

1. *The packing up of his Jewels* is a sign of some storm approaching. *The righteous is taken away from the evil to come,* Isa. 57. 1. When God is packing up his Jewells, imbarquing his *Noahs*, and shouldring away his *Lots*, it's a sad *Omen*, that the day of some dreadfull visitation is at hand. 'Tis true, as we are all mortall, *It is appointed to all men once to dye*: but when God seems to catch them up in haste, and to gather them by whole Clusters, and that in the midst of their strength and service; this is an ordinary *Prognostick* of approaching Judgment. Heb. 9. 27.

Gods withdrawing his presence is another sign that he hath a rod a making. When he hath shut himself up, and will not be spoken with; *I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge*

their

their offence, and ſeek my face; in their affliction they will ſeek me early, Hoſ. 5. 15. This was the caſe with the Spouſe, *Cant.* 5. 6, 7. *I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himſelf*: and what then? *The watchmen that went about the City found me, they ſmote me, they wounded me, the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me*, &c. When God ſayes to his *Moſes*, *Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot againſt them, and that I may conſume them*, Exod. 32. 10. *Pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry nor prayer for them, neither make interceſſion to me, for I will not hear thee.* Jer. 7. 16. And what this did preſage, you may ſee, *Jer.* 11. 14. *Pray not thou for this people*, &c. *for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble*; And chap. 14. 11. *Pray not for this people for their good: when they faſt I will not hear their cry*, &c. *but I will conſume them by the ſword, by the famine, and by the peſtilence*; *Then ſaid I, Ah, Lord God! the Prophets ſay unto them, ye ſhall not ſee the ſword*, &c. *Then the Lord ſaid unto me, both the Prophets and the people that believe them, ſhall know that my word ſhall ſtand*: both the Flatterers and the Flattered ſhall periſh together. O *England*, know, it muſt not be as thy Prophets, but as thy God will.

3. *Gods croſſing the courſe of Nature*, is another ſign that Judgment is haſtning: *Numb.* 17. 8. we read that *Aarons Rod budded and bloſſomed, and bare almonds*: and what? was this a dumb ſign? No: verſe 10, *And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Bring Aarons Rod again before the Teſtimony,*

to be kept for a token againſt the rebells, &c. What did all thoſe prodigious ſigns which God wrought in *Egypt*, portend? I need not tell you: What did the *hand-writing* on *Belſhazzars* wall point at? *Dan.* 5. Our Saviour himſelf argues a neceſſary connection between *ſignes in the Sun, and Moon, and Starrs, and upon earth diſtreſs with perplexity. Luk.* 21. 25. And that which was here particularly intended, was afterward fully accompliſhed by *Titus Veſpaſian* on *Jeruſalem*; that *Abomination of Deſolation* being uſher'd in by a multitude of ſigns and wonders, as Chriſt had foretold, and credible Hiſtory doth abundantly certifie.

4. *A gradual beginning of Judgment* is another preſage that the full blow is coming. God doth uſually ſend ſome drops, as the *Harbingers* of the ſtorm of his wrath, and layes not on with his full might at once, leſt he ſhould cruſh us to pieces; but he chides before he ſtrikes, and begins with gentler ſtrokes, and every ſtroke calls louder and louder for repentance; as being loath to ſtrike harder than needs he muſt. Firſt, he removes from the *Cherub to the threſhold*, *Ezek.* 9. 3. and there turns again, and reaſons the caſe, and takes notice of every weeping eye, and every ſad heart. *Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that ſigh.* Then from the *threſhold to the cherubims*, chap. 10. 18. and then falls a threatning and a promiſing; *Yet will I be to them as a little ſanctuary in the Countries where they ſhall come.* At laſt from the *Cherubims* he departed to the *Mountains*, chap. 11. 23. and thence he uſeth the utmoſt importunity, if at length by any means he

he might reclaim and ſpare them; *Therefore thou* Chap. 12. 3.
ſon of man, prepare thee ſtuff for removing, and remove by day in their ſight,----It may be they will conſider, though they be a rebellious houſe. Many ſhall come in my name, ſayes Chriſt, *ſaying, I am Chriſt, and ſhall deceive many, and ye ſhall hear of warrs, &c. Nation ſhall ariſe againſt nation; theſe are the beginning of ſorrows*, Matth. 24. 5. to 8. Now the beginning argues both the middle and the end to ſucceed.

5. *The joint cryes and warnings of the Prophets* is another ſymptom of approaching miſery; Theſe are called Gods *Watchmen*, and his *Seers*; *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the houſe of Iſrael, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me*, Ezek. 3. 17. *I will ſtand upon my watch, and ſet me upon the tower, to ſee what he will ſay unto me, and what I ſhall anſwer, &c.* Hab. 2. 1. God doth uſually reveal his purpoſe firſt to them, that they may publiſh it unto whom it doth concern; and therefore he adds. verſ. 2. *Write the viſion, and make it plain, that he may run that readeth it.* We are his Ambaſſadors and *Heraulds*; he is wont to ſend out his Summons, and bid battel by us. When thoſe Turtles which were wont to bring you the Olive-branch of peace, the glad tidings of the Goſpel, come with a ſword in their mouths, be confident there is war preparing in heaven.

2. Other grounds of Conjecture are drawn from man, as,

1. *When ſin is on the thriving hand*; God hath a double harveſt; a harveſt of *wheat*, and a harveſt

veſt of *tares*; and he will have both ripe before he cut them down; the harveſt of his *Grace* muſt be *ripe* before he will ſend in his *Sickle*. Grace muſt have its full growth. *Job* 5. 26. *Thou ſhalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a ſhock of corn commeth in his ſeaſon*: And the harveſt of his *wrath* muſt be ripe too; *Put ye in the Sickle, for the harveſt is ripe, the preſs is full, their wickedneſs is great*, Joel. 3. 13. So that we may conclude according to Chriſts Parable of the Fig-tree, *Matth.* 24. 32. *When his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that Summer is nigh.* 'Twas ſin that firſt opened the womb of miſery, and 'tis ſin that ripens and haſtens Judgment; Sin and ſuffering have the meaſures of their growth proportionable; as the one ripens, ſo doth the other too. Now conſider this, ye that forget God, your treaſuring up of ſin, is a *treaſuring up of wrath unto your ſelves againſt the day of Gods wrath*, Rom. 2. 5. O that blind ſinners could but ſee what they are doing! *Tophet is ordained of old, the pile thereof is fire and much wood.*----Iſa. 30. 33. Every ſin brings its faggot to this *pile*. Little did *Perillus* think what he was a doing when he was forging the Tyrant *Phalaris* his curious Inſtrument of Cruelty: Every idle word, every vain thought, every neglect of a known duty, like ſo many Infernal Locuſts, are daily flying from the *dead carcaſe* of thy heart, where they breed, unto the *hive* of a ſad eternity, *crura veneno plena*; and thou ſhalt ſhortly taſte and ſee when Gods vintage and *Burning-time* is come, what this hony is which now ſeems ſo ſweet in thy mouth.

Matth. 12. 36. *Jer.* 4. 2. 4. *Ezek.* 6. 17.

2. *When*

2. *When Gods worship, which he is ever most tender of, is prophaned or idolized.* God calls his Church his *Spouse*, Cant. 5. 1. and is *married* to her, *Jer.* 3. 14. His Worship and Institutions are his *Coition* with his Church, whereby he begets children unto himself; and therefore the abuse of his worship he justly calls Adultery, and spiritual Fornication; a violation of Covenants, and a breach of Conjugal union: This was commonly one principal cause of Gods Controversie with his first Wife, his ancient Spouse, and that which he hath mostly manifested his furious Jealousie about. Several Instances might be produced, but examples of this nature are obvious and occurrent almost every where in the old Testament. Again, Gods Church is his *Garden*, Cant. 4. 12. and *a garden inclosed* too; he keeps it under lock, it is his own *Peculiar*, he will allow no plants here, but those of his own setting; Humane Inventions and Traditions of men, unscriptural Ceremonies and *significant* signs farr-fetcht by the *under-keepers* of this Garden, are weeds which God will root up; he will not have his Garden new modell'd, nor adulterated with mans bastard ornaments; the wrongs that are done here, are sacrilegious wrongs.

3. *When Professors lose their zeal for God*, and the pure and strict wayes of God. *Because Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold*, Matth. 24. 12. *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another*, ver. 10. This was spoken as a presage of that dreadfull Destruction which

Christ

Christ there foretold, *And that day*, saies the Apostle, [that great and terrible day of the Lord] *shall not come, except there come a falling away first.* A general Apostasie is a certain *Omen* of approaching Misery. This was part of Gods accusation against *Ephesus*, Rev. 2. 4. *Thou hast left thy first love*; and what then? ver. 5. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* Was not this the cause why God put away his own chosen Israel, and gave her a bill of divorce? *Jer.* 3. 6, 8. What complaints hath God taken up on this very account? *Why is this People slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?* Jer. 8. 5. *And my people are bent to backsliding from me*, Hos. 11. 7. How tenderly does God seem to take it! Therefore, *if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him*, Heb. 10. 38. And the more gross and general this Apostasie is, the more dreadful, the more universal, the more speedy execution of wrath it doth portend.

4. *When charity among brethren is dying. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another*, Gal. 5. 15. Discord hath a more natural tendency unto ruin than almost any other sin; *A house divided cannot stand*, saies Christ, and therefore this is one principal scope of the Commands of the Gospel, to beget and quicken love and charity among brethren. You shall scarce find any one thing in the new Testament so much prest as this: *For this is the*

Dulce nomen pacis Cicer.

message

message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 1 Joh. 3. 11. But when God ſends a ſpirit of diviſion among his children, and daſhes child againſt child, it is ſufficient evidence of his high diſpleaſure.

5. *When Covenant-breaking lies unrepented of.* What was it that overturn'd *Zedekiah* and his people? *Jer.* 34. 8. After they had entred into ſacred bonds in the houſe of God, to releaſe all their ſervants, that were of the Jewiſh ſeed, and had for a time performed it; but afterward deale deceitfully with them, and brake *their Covenant*, ver. 11. Therefore from ver. 17. to the end, you may ſee the iſſue, *Behold, I will proclaim Liberty for you, ſaith the Lord, to the Sword, to the Peſtilence, and to the Famine.* Other known Inſtances to this purpoſe might be given; but I forbear.

6. *When thoſe ſins for which God hath taken up a controverſie are not removed.* Sufferings, as I have ſaid, are the direct and proper effects of ſin; the only ſucceſsful courſe to heal the effect, is to antidote the cauſe. *Iſrael* cannot proſper, nor ſtand before his enemies, until *Achan* be executed; There's no ſayling, while guilty *Jonas* lyes aboard, but death and ruin on every hand. When God is ſhaking his rod againſt a People, and they regard it not, warning them by his Prophets, and, as it were, planting his *Ordnance*, and ſetting his battel in array againſt them, and they tremble not at it; what is this but a bold challenging of the Almighty, and even a daring him to go on, and to do his worſt; now what can

Joſ. 7.

Jon. 1. 4.

be

be expected in such a case, but that God should arise in the fiercenes of his hottest wrath, and *avenge him of his enemies!*

Ps. 1. 24.

3. We come in the next place to consider, How farr, or in what respects we our selves are under the symptoms, or the strokes of the Rod; And in order hereunto, we will weigh our present estate by the fore-mentioned Prognosticks.

1. *Hath not God been packing up his Jewels?* How many hath he taken away of the eminent bearing-Pillars both of *Church* and *State?* whose lamented funerals have set a sable *Astraciſm* on their sad *Elegies?* God hath seem'd to begin his harvest among them, and to fill his hands with ripe *Fruit*: nay, may I not say, in a sense, to strike down thousands at one blow, even of those that were giving suck, without compassion either to Nurse or Babe: but I will not insist here, *Res ipsa loquitur.*

2. *Hath not God seem'd to withdraw his presence?* at least in some respects; Blessed be God for any tokens of his quickning presence among us; that there is yet so much of the life of God in us, as to carry us out in an unwearied search after him, yet 'twas so with the Spouse, when her *Beloved* had withdrawn himself, *Cant.* 5. 6. *I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.* And is not this our very case? How long have we cryed to God for bread? and as yet we have *stones* instead of bread; or if bread, we have it, but as God threatned *Jerusalem* in another sense, *by weight, and by measure,* by crummes, and by drops; yet blest-

Ezek. 4 15.

sed

fed be God for the crumms that fall from his Table. Hath not God seem'd to defeat the prayers, and fruſtrate the hopes of his people, ſo that they lye as the ſlain in the ſtreets, at the feet of the luſts and wills of all that paſs by.

3. *Hath not God been croſſing the courſe of Nature*, by ſtrange Signes and Prodigies, ſuch, and ſo many, as no age in *England* could ever parallel? I need not be large here, yet I would not that theſe things ſhould be lightly paſt over, nor eaſily forgotten, for doubtleſs God hath high and glorious ends in them; his ſigns are not without their ſignifications. He that hath not ſet the Rain-bow in the clouds for nought, nor one Star or Comet to appear in vain; but hath ordained them *for ſigns and for ſeaſons*; no, not ſo much as a *ſparrow*, or an *hair of our heads* ſhall fall to the ground without a Providence; can we imagine that ever he would thus fill heaven and earth with his ſtrange works of wonder, on no higher deſign, than to be meer *gazing-ſtocks* and *table-talk* with unconcerned man? nay, be confident the dayes are at hand, and now are, that God will interpret his own meaning, and clearly unriddle all theſe his Parables to us. Gen. 1. 14. Matth. 10. 29, 30.

4. *Is not Judgment already begun at the houſe of God?* I hope, I need not run out into particulars here, to tell you your own ſorrows, to pull thoſe groans from your hearts, and to pump thoſe tears from your eyes; I hope that every corner in your houſes, and every Angel

in heaven can bear witness with your consciences, that you are some of those whose *foreheads* Ezek.9.4. God hath *marked* for such as *sigh, and cry for all the abominations*, miseries, and calamities of our poor Sion. *How hath the Lord covered the* Lam.2.1. *daughter of Zion with a cloud, in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembred not his footstool in the day of his anger.*

5. *Hath not this been the joint-cry, and unbelieved report of the Prophets and Watchmen*, for several years together? And now our Prophesie is accomplished, both we, and you all, know & feel what the voice meant, & are smarting under the burthen of the *vision*; but when, or how it shall be removed, we know not: only thus far in general we know, When the Rod hath reach'd its ends, either of *obduration*, or ruine, or (which the Lord grant) of *thorough Reformation*; When the *Figgs* are pickt and separated, when the harvest is ripe, and the Lords people fit for the *Mercies* they look and long for; when the Lords time, even the *set time*, is come; then, and not till then, it shall be. Jer.24.

6. *When was all manner of sin in a more thriving way than now?* Drunkenness, and Whoredom, and Oppression, and Deceit, Swearing and Lying, Debauchery and Prophanenes of all sorts and sizes, is growing ripe apace, being established by the dormient connivance of wholsom Laws: *The Lord hath a contro-* Hos.4.1.2,3. *versie with the Inhabitants of the Land, because*

ther

there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the Land. By ſwearing, and lying, and killing, and ſtealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and bloud toucheth bloud. Therefore ſhall the Land mourn.--- What's become of Sabbaths, and Sabbath-duties, Inſtitutions and Celebrations? the beauty and power of them? Are we not like *Ezekiels* pot, *whoſe ſcum is therein, and whoſe ſcum is not gone out of it*? Nay, if we look home on our ſelves, we may find the *Leproſie* on our own walls: how can we juſtifie our Pride and Worldlineſs, our Wantonneſs, our Cenſoriouſneſs and ſelf-endedneſs, our Unbelief and Impatience? Don't theſe things teſtifie againſt us? Ezek. 24. 6.

7. *Is not the worſhip of God abuſed*; and that both practically and doctrinally? But I muſt be ſilent here. *Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes ſtupent.*

8. *Is there not a great declining, and loſing of zeal for God?* How ſad and general hath been the Apoſtacy of worldly-minded and worldly-ended *Demas's*? Who would have thought that ever ſuch hearts had been enkenneld under ſuch tongues? that ſuch *Angels of light* had been no other than *transformed Devils*? Who would have thought that *Judas* the *Diſciple* had been the *Traitor*? May not Chriſt new the wounds with which he hath been wounded *in the houſe of his friends*? Nay, let me ask you, whoſe whoſe hearts and minds have been ſavingly inlightned and warmed with the quickning Beams of the *Sun of Righte-* 2 Cor. 11. 14. Iohn 6. 70. Zech. 13. 6.

ouſneſs, How have you flouriſhed with your
Dan. 1. 12. *water and pulſe?* Are not your Graces and
Hopes ſhivering within you? what's become
of thoſe divine ſparks that have been begotten
in you? are they as quick and lively, as
forcible and ſerviceable, as they were wont
to be?

9. *Is not charity among brethren dying?*
partly from the jarring of worldly Intereſts, and
partly from the diſagreement of Judgment and
Opinion? How few are there, that, like bre-
Pſal. 133. 1 thren, *dwell together in unity?* This hath been
a diſeaſe of a long time lamented, and yet
lamentations of this nature are as ſeaſonable as
ever: Oh! when will God cure the wounds
among brethren! we have been licking our-
ſelves whole indeed, but alas! it hath been with
a cankered tongue, ſo that the *Leproſie* hath
ſpread and gotten ſtrength by the means of
its *Cure*.

10. *Doth not Covenant-breaking yet lye unre-*
pented of? How many *Oaths*, *Proteſtations*,
Leagues and *Solemn Covenants*, have there been
impoſed and taken, whereof the one hath neceſ-
ſarily and manifeſtly implyed the violation of
the other? O! the miſerable and curſed pro-
ſtitutions of Conſcience! Thoſe that make ſo
light of Oaths, will not make ſo light of the
Vengeance of that God unto whom they have
ſworn: no Covenant hath, on all ſides, been ſo
faithfully kept, as that with Satan and Self: This
is a lamentation, and let it be for a lamenta-
tion. Beſides, how many private, perſonal
and

and occasional vows and promises have there past between God and your own souls, on several forlorn straits and emergencies? and have they not all been as easily broken as they have been made? Oh! let me lay up these things in the closets of your Consciences, and, when you are alone, seriously a d sadly conne them over.

11. *Are those sins for which God hath taken up the Controversie removed?* Have we *heard the rod, and him who hath appointed it?* Have we answered Gods demands? nay, have we duely debated the business, and examined the ground of the Quarrel? Have we been in *Parly* with God, and executed his *Writs of Inquiry*, by the *Commission Office* of Conscience, throughout the *Liberties* and *Precincts* both of the outer and inner man? If not, how can we rationally expect a comfortable issue? Can a rotten *Liver* produce sound bloud? *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* nay, *Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*; as long as sin is the seed, the harvest will be wrath; if we sow the *wind*, we must expect to *reap the whirlwind.* Can you dry up the streams, as long as the fountain is alwayes sending out fresh supplies? though you may seem to bay it back a while, yet, sinner, believe it, the vengeance of God is all the while *pending* against thee, and thy *Bay* will not hold long; but when it bursts, look for a sweeping Judgment. Now lay all these things together, and by these, and the like, judge how farr we are

Matth. 7. 16. Gal. 6. 7. Hos. 8. 9.

under both the ſymptoms and the ſtrokes of the Lords Rod.

2. In the next place, I am to prove the *Doctrine*, and to evince the duty; *That you ought to be ſenſible, not only of the rod it ſelf, but of the ſymptoms of an approaching Rod.*

I hope I need not ſpend much time here; Is it not pity that words and threatnings ſhould not prevail with rational creatures, without blowes? why, conſider; ſhould God ſhew his skill to hit, he might ſtrike thee in the ſecret parts unawares, and come upon thee in the
1 Sam. 24. 4. dark; how eaſily might he find thee, as *David* found his enemy, and ſerve thee as *Jael* ſerved
Iudg. 4. 21 *Siſera*. He is not bound to ſound his Trumpet, before he takes up his ſword; Gods threatnings are in mercy; he threatens, that he may ſpare; the Ambaſſadours of his Judgements, are conditionally Ambaſſadours of Peace; every Warning offers you reconciliation upon Gods terms, the Motto of his ſword is, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?* Now I ſhall knit up the Argument of this Aſſertion in this threefold Motive.

1. *'Tis the beſt way to prevent the coming of the rod.* What ſworn witneſſes might I produce you from Scripture-Records? Ah! my brethren, ſhall the men of *Nineveh* riſe in Judgment againſt us? ſhall we juſtifie *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, and *Jeruſalem*, whom the juſt vengeance of God hath purſued to their utter ruine, and ſet up for *warnings* unto us? See *Joel* 2. 12. *Turn ye even to me with all your heart,*

heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, and rent your hearts, and not your garments. God had threatned to rent them with his Judgments. *Blow ye the Trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain, let all the Inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand. A day of darkness, and of gloominess,* &c. yet, *turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful---Who knoweth if he will return, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?* Observe Gods method and carriage in the course of his Judgments; he threatens that he may not correct, he corrects that he may not destroy; if less ado will compass his ends, he sits down, and proceeds no farther; he will spare every blow that may be spar'd, and will not adde one *grain* more than is of necessity.

2. *It will arm thee for the coming of the rod, if it do come. The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.* Prov. 22. 3. Though thy foreseeing of it, and humbling thy self under it, may not prevent the coming of it, yet it will be a *hiding place* for thee when it doth come. 'Tis true, the storm may fall on the *fields* of thy [illegible]ts, on the *gardens* of thy delights, on the *house* of thy rest and peace; but it can't reach thy *soul*, as long as *thy life is hid with Christ in God.* Indeed *Jonas* cryes our, that *the waters compassed him about, even to the soul*, Jonah 2. 5. And *David* complains, that *his soul was among lions.* Psal. 57. 4. Bus this may

be ſpoken in an *Hyperbolical* phraſe, and may be true of the *animal* part of the *ſoul*, their lives, and the ſupport and comfort of their lives being in extreme hazzard. Nay, and 'tis true too, that the deareſt of Gods ſervants have been ſometimes guilty of *Dilapidations*, and by their neglects have let in rain in upon them, to the deſpoiling the preſent ſtate of their ſpiritual comforts; and yet the foundation which is of God hath ſtood ſure. Thus oftentimes it comes to paſs through her own weakneſs, or unwatchfulneſs, that the poor Soul is forced to ſcrabble to ſhoar, like *Paul's* companions, on the *Planks* of broken peace and ſhatter'd comforts. 'Twas the bleſſed temper of a holy man, now in reſt, under all the tortures wherewith his body was rackt, that he could truly and chearfully bear witneſs for God; *Not one drop of wrath in all this.* Though thy loſſes be great, and thy ſufferings great, though thy Credit be gone, thy Eaſe, thy Plenty, thy Liberty, thy Friends, thy Hopes, and all be gone, they are but gone a gathering, as *Bees* from their *hives*; anon thou ſhalt ſee them come flocking home as heavy laden with the bleſſed gains and *overplus* as ever they can fly. Thy *Credit* with man, hath brought thee home credit and favour with God; thy *Broken name* is return'd a Rev. 2. 17. *New name*, a title of honour, and royal dignity; and no bare title neither, as that was thou hadſt loſt: but the *Crown* it ſelf is come, and 2 Cor. 1, 22. the *Seal* of the *Inheritance*. Thy painful, unconſtant *eaſe* is not come halting, but dancing,

eing, like *David* before the *Ark*: from hence- 2 Sam. 6.
forth *thy ſoul ſhall dwell at eaſe*: other man- 16.
ner of eaſe than what the *Fool* in the Goſpel Pſal. 24. 10.
could boaſt of, or any other the world can pro- Luk. 12. 19.
duce: Thy ſpoiled *Plenty* is come home with a
ſpring-tide of richeſt increaſe. Oh! who could
ever have hop'd for ſuch *Advantage*? Lord, if
thou hadſt given me leave to ask, I had never
askt half ſo much! 'Twas but a handfull of duſt
thou *adventured'ſt*, and behold, *heaven and* 1 Tim.
earth is now little enough to hold the Increaſe. 4. 8.
Thy *Liberty* which went *Captive* away, is come
Trimphing home: to what a height is *Joſeph*
the poor barter'd Lad advanc'd? See what a
Repeal is endorſed by the *Parliament* of Hea-
ven, on the backſide of thy *Mittimus*, or *Pro-*
ſcription! *He that is called in the Lord*, 1 Cor.
[though *a ſervant*, though a bond-man, though 7. 22.
an exile, yet] *is the Lords Free-man. And if* Joh. 8. 36.
the Son ſhall make you free, ye ſhall be free
indeed. Now therefore thou art no more a Eph. 2. 19.
ſtranger and a forreiner, but a fellow-citizen
with the Saints, and of the houſhold of God. Act. 21. 39.
A Citizen of no mean City, (ſayes *Paul.*)
Are thy *Friends* gone? *lift up now thine eyes,* Gen. 13.
and look from the place where thou art, North- 14.
ward, and Southward, and Eaſtward, and Weſt-
ward. Thouſands, and ten thouſands of Friends
for one, and never a one but a *Jonathan*, 2 Sam. 1.
whoſe love is *wonderful, paſſing the love of wo-* 26.
men, and whoſe power comes not ſhort of their
love. A whole *heaven* of friends above thee, a
whole *volume* of friends before thee, and a thou-

ſand

ſand witneſſing Friends within thee. Are thy *hopes* down? why, pluck up thy ſpirits; the *waggons* are come, richly laden, and full fraught with higheſt ſatisfaction. O, bleſſed Adventure! O happy Merchandiſe! O, Chriſtian! if this it be to ſow, never bethink thy Seed; if this be the harveſt, never bethink thy Patience.

Gen. 45. 27.

'Tis threatned as the plague of the wicked, that their miſeries ſhall come upon them, *as pangs upon a woman in travel*, 1 Theſ. 5. 7. irreſiſtibly, and unexpectedly. *In a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of*, Matth. 24. 50. Yet not for want of warning: God ſcorns to ſteal upon them; he comes openly, and blows his *Trumpet* before him: but 'tis, for not taking warning: and hence it is, that *they meet with darkneſs in the day time, and grope*, and ſtumble, and fall, *in the noon-day as in the night*.

Iob. 5. 14.

3. *It will argue thy care to pleaſe God*, and that thou ſtandeſt in ſome holy fear, and filial awe of him. 'Tis a token of an Ingenuous ſpirit in a child, to obſerve the looks and carriage of his Father towards him; when a look or a nod is enough to intimate the parents mind, and to cauſe the dutiful child to obey, or ſubmit and humble himſelf. *As the eyes of ſervants look unto the hands of their Maſters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her Miſtreſs, ſo our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.* Pſal. 123. 2. O my brethren! if it be not all one with you whether God be pleaſed or diſpleaſed, whe-

whether you ſtand or fall before him; if you would be hid in the day of his wrath; take notice of his frowns, and of his ſmiles, and which way his rod leans when his hand is lifted up. Walk with him, and follow after him, in the paths of his Providence: walk with him, I ſay, but take heed of ſtepping before him, or parting from him, and humble your ſelves under the tokens of his fatherly diſpleaſure. O how kindly would God take this at your hands! and how ſoon would he lead you through theſe *thickets* and *bryars*, into more open and pleaſant walks?

Thus far for the Doctrinal part, I ſhall ſpeak but briefly in the application of it, that I may haſten to what principally I intended in the choice of this ſubject.

This truth then argues three ſorts of people under juſt reprehenſion. *Uſe* 1.

1. *Such as will not acknowledge God in, and under the Rod*: That cry out under the *ſmart* of it, but are blind as to the real *Ends* and *Deſignes* of it: and herein the beſt are very guilty, if we throughly conſider theſe four things, wherein God is to be acknowledged in his Rod.

1. *In his Providence*, as he is the Author of it. *Shall there be evil in the City, and the Lord hath not done it?* Am. 3. 6. *It is the Lord*, ſaid *Eli*, *let him do what ſeemeth him good*: 1 Sam. 3. 18. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*. Job 1. 21. not the *Sabeans*, nor the *Chaldeans*; here was no quarrelling with

with ſecond cauſes, nor falling out with Inſtruments? O ſuffer me, Chriſtian, now to deal a little plainly and faithfully with thee. Doſt thou *acknowledge God in his Providence*? art thou really perſwaded, that he is the Author of every ſtroke thou ſuffereſt? Have thine Enemies a Commiſſion from heaven, even the Broad ſeal, for what they do? (though they act not intentionally in proſecution of any ſuch Commiſſion). *O Aſſyrian, the rod of mine anger, &c. I will ſend him* (not onely ſuffer him) *againſt an hypocritical nation, and againſt the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the ſpoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire in the ſtreets*, Iſa. 10. 5, 6. Are Inſtruments but the Chariot-wheels whereon God is riding out to correct, and to chaſtize? what means then this ſnarling at the ſtone? this contending with the rod, as if that were in all the fault? If it be God that ſtrikes thee, as thou acknowledgeſt, how dareſt thou oppoſe thy ſelf againſt thy Maker? What is it that your complaints are ordinarily ſo full of, when, like Turtles, you are bemoaning your ſelves together? But, the cruelty and oppreſſion of Enemies, exclaiming on the ſubtilty and unfaithfulneſs of one, or on the malice, revenge, or ſelf-ſeeking of another; this argues your half-acknowledging of God. *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth*, ſayes *David, becauſe thou didſt it*. Pſal. 39, 9. He obſerves the hand as well as the rod; God had to do with him, and he has to do with

God

God again, in the affliction: here lyes the Quarrel, and therefore he hath nought to say to Instruments, he dares not once to open his mouth.

2. *God is to be acknowledged in his Sovereignty.* His authority is absolute and unlimited: Heaven and Earth, and all created beings, Souls and Bodies, and whatsoever we are or have, are peculiarly his. *Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? hath not the Potter power over the clay?* Rom. 9. 20, 21. Now *acknowledging*, implyes a submitting to, an acquiescing and resting under, some clear and full perswasion. It is not only an act of the lip, or of the judgment, but is comprehensive of the whole man, the heart and life, the assent and consent: When a *Question* is granted, the *dispute* is ended: if Gods Sovereignty in the Latitude and universal fulness of it, be throughly acknowledged, we have nothing then to gainsay him in his arbitrary execution of it; if he take our health, or our wealth, or peace, or friends, or lives from us, we are thus far satisfied, that he takes but his own, he doth but fetch in what he had lent out; and we do no more than we are bound to do in honouring him, though with the expence of all those borrowed enjoyments. *Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker; let the Potsheards strive with the Potsheards of the earth; shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?* Isa. 45. 9.

3. *God*

3. *God will be acknowledged in his Justice.* *Wilt thou condemn him that is most just?* says *Elihu* to *Job*: *Surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment*, Job 34. 17. and 12. 'Tis true, men may be unjust: *If thou seest the Oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of Judgment and Justice in a province, marvel not at the matter.* Eccles. 5. 8. 'Tis no strange thing to find unrighteousness among men, nay, too often among the best of men; but to impeach God of injustice, or to charge him with hard measure, is most nefarious Blasphemy. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Nay, *after all this that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou, O God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve.* Ezr. 9. 13. Yet who is there that will not acknowledge that God is just, even in his severest providences? But alas, my brethren! 'tis one thing to say that God is just, another thing to sit down fully satisfied under the clear conviction of the Equity and Reasonableness of it.

Gen. 18. 25.

4. *God must be acknowledged in his ends.* Now his *Ends* are either secret or revealed. As for those *secrets* of God, those *Arcana Imperii*, they are infinitely above us, lockt up in the Cabinet of divine Counsel: all that is visible in God are his back-parts; his works are in the dark, *à parte post*; we can see no further than is revealed. And in this sense is God to be acknowledged in his *Ends*: and what those reveal-

revealed *Ends* are, with reference to his Rod, both in general and in ſpecial, the enſuing diſcourſe may more at large diſcover: at preſent I ſhall only ſhevv you vvhat it is to acknovvledge God in his revealed *ends*, vvhich imports, as I conceive, theſe tvvo things.

1. *To ask Counſell of God.* God hath given you his *Oracles*, his *vrim and Thummim*, the *Law* and the *Teſtimony*; and hither you are to have recourſe. *Search the Scriptures.* Acknowledging preſuppoſeth knowledge, as every rational act of the *will* implyes the precedent act of the underſtanding.

2. *To joyn iſſue with God*, to drive on the ſame *End*, and to manage the ſame *deſign* with God. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Act. 9. 6. ſayes St. *Paul*, thy Will ſhall be my will, and thy Intereſt my intereſt. *If this Cup may not* Matth. 26. *paſs away from me, except I drink it, thy will* 42. *be done.* Is it thy Will that I ſhould bear this Croſs? ſo it ſhall be mine too. Is this thy way to humble and reform me, to make me *perfect through ſufferings?* bleſſed be thy Wiſdom! bleſſed be thy care! If this may be the fruit, to take away my ſin, ſpare me not: let the Fleſh ſay what it vvill, let the World adviſe how it vvill, I vvill not *ask counſell at thoſe ſtocks: O my ſoul! come not thou into their ſecret; unto their Aſſembly, be not thou united.* Lord, take thine ovvn courſe, abate me not one grain that may be for my good. If poverty, if ſhame, if baniſhment, if death be the vvay, *Thy will be done.* Lord, take me at my

word,

word, and let it appear that thou haſt honou-
Pſal. 119. 75. red me, and *that thou in faithfulneſs* (according to thy Promiſe and Covenant) *haſt afflicted me.*

2. *This reproves thoſe that will believe no more than they feel*, but like that *Horſe* that *Job* ſpeaks of, *Job* 39.21,22. ---*Rejoyceth in his ſtrength, he goeth on to meet the armed man*, (nay, the armed God); *he mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted, neither turneth he back from the ſword.* Of this generation are thoſe *ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts, and ſaying, Where is the promiſe of his coming? for ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation.* 2 Pet. 3.3, 4. Well ſinner! Whether thou wilt believe, or whether thou wilt not believe, this ſhall ſtand on record within thee for ever, that thou haſt been warn'd. *The dayes are at hand, and the effect of every viſion; when God ſhall make this Proverb to ceaſe, The dayes are prolonged, and every vision faileth.* Ezek. 12. 22, 23. The time is coming, when God ſhall be as good as his word with thee; and if Faith can have no entrance at thy *Hearing*, it ſhall by thy other ſenſe of *Feeling*. Though Hell be the portion and place of unbelievers, yet there thou ſhalt, as *the Devils*, and the reſt of thy curſed brethren do, *believe and tremble*. 'Tis true, God doth ſometimes drive the nail with his *axe*, when the *hammer* will not do: but know this too, that the nail that turns at the *hammer*, is wont to break under the *axe*.

3. *It reproves such as slight any thing whereby God manifests his displeasure.* You have heard in eleven particulars, what Gods ordinary course is in predicting his displeasure, with a people or person; and, to slight the threatnings of God, is to despise both the person and authority threatning. *He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God,* 1 Thes. 4. 8. And these warnings and threatnings of God are despised these two wayes:

1. *Privately,* and that in these three respects.

1. *In the want of Faith to believe them,* either in the *Reality* of them, or in the *Ends* and meaning of them. Though I would not you should *prostitute* your Faith and Credence, and set open these doors to every *Bastard-Page* of lying *Fame,* yet neither should you obstinately nail up your doors against all strangers; as 'tis storied of the *Amyclæi,* who being often terrified and wearied with false reports, at length by Law condemned all Reports, and then quickly became their enemies prey. But in this surmising, inquiring, credulous, and yet unbelieving Age, this is all I shall add at present, as to this case; Those things that are inevident, and improbable in the *Fable,* may yet be certain, and seasonable in the *Moral*: therefore what will not serve for a *staff* to support thee, may yet, one way or other, serve for *fuel* to warm thee. But how disputable soever God's warnings may sometimes, and to some persons, seem to be, *We have a sure word of Prophesie,*

whereunto ye do well that ye take heed. 2 Pet. 1. 19. Yet, alas! *who hath believed this report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* Though the *Watchmen* cry from the Tower, and blow the Trumpet from the Walls; yet, Where are the souls that take themselves to be so deeply concerned in the business? Sinner! thou shalt shortly know which way the malign and fatal *Aspects* of those fierie *Comets* of Divine threatnings look, when God shall bring thee out with *Agag*, and tell thee, as *Nathan* told *David*, *Thou art the man*, the very person I aim'd at; and though thou wouldst not hear thy case pleaded, thou shalt both see and suffer the sentence executed.

2. *In the want of fear*, to reverence and stand in awe of them, as the Majesty of God, and the importance of the issue require. *Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding! which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not. Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?* Jer. 5. 21, 22. *Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is great in might; who would not fear thee, O King of Nations!* Jer. 10. 6, 7. O the strange stupidity! the atheistical madness of an unbelieving heart! Surely, if any created *Being* be worse than the Devil, 'tis this unbelieving Heart. *The Devils believe and tremble.* O how is it, that the miserable *Proselyte* hath so far out-stript his cursed *Tutour!*

3. *In the want of Repentance to ſubmit.* When either through the ſtoutneſs of the heart men ſcorn to ſtoop; or through the blindneſs of their minds know not how to do it, farther than the bare Ceremony and externity of it; unto whom God ſeems, as *Lot* to his ſons in law, but as *one that mocks with them. Yet ſuffer God to ſpeak*, nay, he will ſpeak, and, *after that he hath ſpoken*, (as *Job* ſaid to his friends, and performed his word) *mock on*, Job 21. 3. *But unto this man will I look*, (with an eye of mercy and ſalvation) *even to him that is poor, and of a contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word*, Iſa. 66. 2.

2. *Poſitively*; and thus likewiſe theſe three wayes:

1. *By belying them.* Thus the *Sorcerers* and *Magicians* of *Egypt* endeavoured to belye God, to the hardning and ruining of *Pharaoh* and his People. Are there none of theſe *Politique Magi* to be found among us? who (beyond the Impudence of the *Chaldean Aſtrology*) will undertake to interpret the hand-writing, *pro lubitu ſuo.* Theſe are ſome of Iſraels Prophets, of whom God ſpeaks, *Jer.* 14. 15. *The Prophets that propheſie in my name, and I ſent them not, yet they ſay, Sword and famine ſhall not be in this Land; by Sword and Famine ſhall thoſe Prophets be conſumed.* Theſe ſons of *Chenaanah*, that with *their horns of iron will puſh the Syrians, untill they have conſumed them*, will at *Ramoth* be of another mind, 1 *Kin.* 22. 11. If God threatens, 'tis in vain for us to flat-

ter our ſelves: you may call evil good; and the μιγαλεῖα θεοῦ, the evident prints of the Finger of God, Fortune Chance or Caſualty; the threatnings of Scripture, old Antiquated Riddles; the plain-dealing of *Michaia*, a ſpirit of ill will, and diſloyal affection; but you will not call Hell Heaven, nor everlaſting Burnings the Bleſſedneſs you promiſed your ſelves.

2. *By deriding them.* When *Iſrael* was rotten-ripe for Judgment, and God was ſending his harveſt-men to make a *ſmooth field* of them; 'tis recorded, to their ſhame, but for our warning, 2 *Chron.* 36. 15, 16. *The Lord God of their Fathers ſent to them by his Meſſengers riſing up betimes, and ſending: becauſe he had compaſſion on his people, and on his dwelling place; but they mocked the meſſengers of God, and deſpiſed his words, and miſuſed his Prophets, until the wrath of the Lord aroſe againſt his people, till there was no remedy. Which way went the ſpirit of the Lord from me,* ſaid *Zedekiah, to ſpeak to thee?* The day is coming, that thou ſhalt know by what ſpirit we are acted; that we ſpeak not of our ſelves, nor run, like *Ahimaaz*, on a feigned, or begged errand. And if we muſt be mockt, and derided, and ſmitten on the cheek for our labour: yet for our own ſakes we rejoyce; but for our ſacred authorities ſake, and for your own ſoul ſake, we cannot but tremble, and weep both over it and you.

1 Kin. 22. 24.

3. *By*

3. *By taking a wrong course to evade them.* These were some of *Saul's* practical *Politicks*. God had threatned *to rent the Kingdom from him, and to give it to a neighbour of his that was better then he*, 1 Sam. 15. 28. and now the wisest course he can advise on to secure his Kingdome, is, to destroy the man (were it possible) whom God had chosen to succeed him. So when God withdrew his presence from him at *Gilboa*; and answered him not, neither by *dreams*, nor by *Urim*, nor by *Prophets*, 1 Sam. 28. 6. which is one ordinary symptom, (as I have shewn you) of some Judgment at hand; away he runs to forbidden means, (nay, by his own law forbidden and condemned) and sues to the Devil for counsel in his desperate case. I might enlarge my self here: but what might farther be added, I shall reserve for another place.

You have heard your duty, Brethren: but, duty heard, and in the notion of it acknowledged, and yet not practically imbraced, is the God-provoking sin, and the heart-plague of this our *Sceptick* Age. Duties are obligatory on the Conscience and Conversation; O take heed of *breaking Gods bonds, and casting his cords from you*. We have heard, nay, in some measure, we feel, both the symptoms and strokes of the Lords Rod: Sit down now, and begin to *count the cost*. There is a *Wilderness*, and a *Jordan*, and, it may be, a *Red Sea* yet before us; *gird up the loyns of your minds* now, and *be strong in the Lord*. *Watch and be sober*. Watch for the *Use 2.*

word of command, and reſolvedly ſtick to your choice and holy profeſſion, whatever come o'nt. And for your awakening and encouragement, conſider;

1. *Within a few moments more, all the merry dayes of the wicked, and all the ſad hours of the righteous, ſhall be at an end for ever*; the *Field* ſhall be tried, and the *Battel* ſhall be over, and the old *Quarrel* never to be reviv'd more between the ſeed of the woman, and the ſeed of the Serpent; *The pleaſures of ſin are but for a moment*, Heb. 11. 25. and, *How are they brought down into deſolation, as in a moment!* Pſal. 73. 19. He ſeems to be raviſht at the conceit of it. Thoſe *Vipers*, that even now were threatning thy deſtruction, and greedily thirſting for thy blood; ſee! *with the turn of a hand*, they are gone, and are now crawling in the *fire*. O wonderful and glorious change! *For when they ſhall ſay, Peace and Safety, then ſudden deſtruction commeth upon them as travel upon a woman with child, and they ſhall not eſcape*, 1 Theſ. 5. 3. O Sinner! One moment more, and then ſucceeds thy wofull Eternitie. One game more, and then turns up thy undoing *Card*. One hour's paſtime more, and then farewell to all thy pleaſures for ever; not one *ſong*, not one *dance*, not one *pot*, not one glimpſe of joy, not one merry thought nor word more then. On this one *Caſt* lies thy whole Eſtate. Spend out this, as thou art doing, and thou haſt never a *farthing* more to ſpend, nor to ſave, in this world, nor in the world to come. So on the other

other hand, the troubles of the righteous are under the ſame *Date and determination*; the one's hell is altogether as ſhort as the others heaven: For as the one Bucket goes down, the other comes up. *His anger endureth but a moment*, Pſal. 30. 5. *Our light affliction which is but for a moment*, 2 Cor. 4. 17. *For a ſmall moment have I forſaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath, I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlaſting kindneſs will I have mercy on thee, ſaith the Lord thy Redeemer.* Iſa. 54. 7, 8. Pluck up thy ſpirits then, O Chriſtian! *and turn to thy ſtrong hold, thou Priſoner of hope.* Zech. 9. 12. Behold! yonder comes thy Redeemer, *leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills.* Cant. 2. 8. See what haſte he makes! he is come! he is come! *Behold, he ſtandeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the window!* He is nearer than thou art aware. Ariſe, O drooping Soul! view the heavens, 'tis all cleer and ſerene above us: *In portu navigas.* Are not theſe the gates of thy Father's Kingdom? Is not the ſmell of the Country already in thy Noſtrils? Are not the golden Inſtruments of Joy a tuning, to welcome home *the loſt Son*? O hold out Faith and Patience! one League farther, one Tide more, and then thou art ſafe for ever. Reaſon thus with thy ſelf; Were *This* my *Portion*, and all that *I* were ever like to ſee or hope for; were my whole *Venture* in this *Leaking bottom*; Had I no ſettled Inheritance another where, I were miſerable indeed, yea, *of all men the moſt miſe-*

Luk. 15. 23.

rable; but, blessed be the freeness of rich
2 Sam. 23. 5. Grace, the case is otherwise; *The Covenant is ordered in all things, and sure.* This hath been my Trading time, my sowing season, my yeares of Service; and now the *Jubilee* is at hand, and the Fields look white to the harvest. Awake then, O North wind, and come thou South, fill my Sails, and drive me once to shoar.

2. *Remember, The persevering Christian is the only blessed Christian. Ye shall be hated of all men for my names sake, but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved,* Mar. 13. 13. *All is well that ends well.* O that I could drive a *nail* here, that might hold! There's no *Fruit* fit for Gods *hoard*, but that which hangs till *Gathering-time*; that which falls before, is lost, or sent to the *Mill* to be beaten to pieces. *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* Heb. 10. 38. *If any man*, whatever he be, whatever he hath been, or seem'd to be, whatever he intends to be in fairer weather and better leisure, ὁ δίκαιος, sayes the Original; if the *Righteous*, or *Just man*, he that should *live by Faith*, ἐὰν ὑποστείληται, if he *draw back*, *si se subduxerit*, if he shall slink away; the word signifies *aliqua ex parte dissimulare*, to desire to be *excused* under some fair, it may be religious yet false, *Pretence*, to run away behind one's back, as a Coward or Traitor from his Colours: if any man thus draw back, *my soul shall have no pleasure in him*: Here is a *Liptote*; under this calm

calm *Negative* lies a *Taberoh*, even the fire of Num. 11. 3.
the Lords Jealouſie. *q. d.* It is the higheſt affront and diſpleaſure that can be offer'd unto my very ſoul, (ſpeaking after the manner of men) and ſo I take it, and ſhall record it unto the Judgment of the Great Day. *No man having put his hand to the Plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdome of God.* Luk. 9. 62. βλέπων εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω. *looking on thoſe things which are behind* (the *Fiſh*, and the *Cucumbers*, and the *Melons* of *Egypt*:) or which tend to a ſinful Retrogradation, for ſo much the words Grammatically import: therefore, ſayes Chriſt, *Remember Lot's wife*, Luk. 17. 32. *This one thing I do, Hoc ago*, ſayes the Apoſtle, *forgetting* τὰ ὀπίσω, *thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth to thoſe things which are before, I preſs toward the mark*, Phil. 3. 13, 14. O my brethren! if ever you intend to preſs forward, take heed of looking backward; as ever you hope to reach the mark, take heed you fall not by the way. Remember Chriſtian! thou art under bonds and Covenants with God for thy faithfull and conſtant ſervice, during the whole and full term of thy life: Thou art under *Liſt* with him as thy lawful *Captain* and *Commander*; Thou haſt his *Preſſe-mony* and his *Livery*, and he hath thy *Name*, and thy *Hand and Seal* too, for thy loyal and impartial obedience: be ſure, God will find thee out among the trees *of the Garden*, and woe be to thee, when he begins to manage ſuch a Tryal againſt thee, either he will whip thee home by

by *weeping Croſs*, the higheſt favour thou art capable of in ſuch a caſe; or elſe, (which is more to be feared) will let thee alone till thy meaſure be full, and then reckon with thee for all together. O remember! Gifts are nothing, Duties are nothing, all external Priviledges are nothing; Truth and Perſeverance is that which crowns all.

3. *Conſider, As tall Cedars in Gods Lebanon as thou or* I, *have fallen, and are daily falling. In the later dayes ſome ſhall depart from the Faith*, 1 Tim. 4. 1. Under the ſixth Seal *the Starrs of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a Fig-tree caſteth her untimely figs, when ſhe is ſhaken with a mighty wind*, Rev. 6. 13. Is not God now opening this *ſeal*, and ſhaking the *fig-tree*? What year, what age, had the Devil gotten ſuch *windfalls* as of late he hath gotten? The third part, nay more than the third part of the ſtarrs are ſmitten, (*If it were poſſible*) *they ſhall deceive the very elect*, Matth. 24. 24. But, bleſſed be God, who hath made it impoſſible; *Who are kept by the power of God through Faith unto Salvation*, 1 Pet. 1. 5. We are kept, but not by our own power. *We live, yet not we, but Chriſt liveth in us*, Gal. 2. 20. O take heed how you adventure away on your own feet. *Wherefore let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall*, 1 Cor. 10. 12. Many, nay, moſt of thoſe that fall, never riſe more, but are of them *who draw back unto perdition*. 'Tis true, A *Peter* may fall, a *Noah*, a *Lot*, a *David*, a *Solomon* may fall; the

the Devil may lay ſnares and ſtumbling blocks in their path, and get them down; But, *though he fall, he ſhall not be utterly caſt down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand*, Pſal. 37. 24. Though he fall, yet he ſhall riſe again; and obſerve, though he riſe, yet not by his own power, *for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.* O take heed then! if you fall, there you muſt lye, nay, there you muſt dye; unleſs that Grace which you have abuſed help you up: thou mayſt riſe, but thy loſſes will almoſt undo thee. *Peter* got up again, with good help, but he wept bitterly for it. Gods choiſeſt children have fallen, but it coſt them dear to riſe, yet 'twas well they did riſe; nay, and it may be well that it coſt them ſo dear. O, let theſe be your warnings! even thoſe thouſands that ſtumble at, and fall, and break their necks over the Croſs, which they ſhould, and might have taken up, and carried on, both with eaſe and honour; and thoſe hundreds that thus fall, and break their peace. *Now all theſe things hapned unto them for enſamples: and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 11. O take warning by others, that others may not hereafter take warning by you!

4. Let me ask thee, *Is there not enough in Hell to ſoure all thy preſent comforts? and enough in Heaven to ſweeten all thy preſent croſſes?* Tell me, Chriſtian, if thou art not aſham'd to tell, What is it thou art at a ſtand about, whether thou mayeſt go forward or backward?

ward? Is it that *which is not common to Man*? Hath God made thee no *way to escape* with it, unless thou take one of the Devils blind wayes to escape from it? What *Lions* are these, that it should seem impossible to pass them? Are the pleasant looks of the World so fair, so ravishing, so real, so beatifying, that the eternal frowns of the Almighty God can't daunt nor change them? Hast thou gotten a heaven on this side Heaven, and entail'd it on the other World too? Hast thou procured an *Act of Repeal* on all those Scriptures, and unalterable *Statutes* of Heaven, which have provided the Contrary? As, *Job* 3. 21. *Eccles.* 5. 15. 1 *Tim.* 6. 7. *Psal.* 49. 17. *&c.* Oh! how soon will all these Dreams and Apparitions vanish, when once the dawning of Eternity is broken upon thee! When once that light shall appear, every thing will look like it self; Sin will then be Sin, and Heaven will be Heaven; this old *Hag*, the World, shall then be stript of her *Harlots Vail*, and shall deceive no more: Hell will be Hell indeed, and Christ will then be Christ. When thine eyes be once open'd, thou wilt see that thou art *naked*. And is there not enough in Heaven to make thee amends at last? Will not the End defray the charge of the Means? Canst thou think it will never quit cost to be a Christian in all places and in all cases? If Heaven be not worth this, I would never perswade thee to adventure for it: Alas, Christian! were thy heart as big as thy head, didst thou but believe thy own Confessions, all

these

theſe *If's* and *And's* would be laid aſide; thou wouldſt ſtand no longer a chooſing; the *Queſtion* would be no more a *Queſtion* with thee. What the World hath, and what the World can do, we know; we know the utmoſt of it; we can ſee both ends of it at once, and wrap up all it's arrows in one Syllable, *Death*, which, at worſt, is but an *Anticipation* of Nature. Alas, alas! I am almoſt aſham'd to diſparage that infinite Glory above, by ſo vile, and diſproportionable a Compariſon: Well might the Apoſtle *reckon*, *That the ſufferings of this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us*, *Rom.* 8. 8. What this glory is, I cannot yet tell you; He that had ſeen farther than ever I yet ſaw, knew not how to expreſs his raviſhing ſight, and unſpeakable works; neither ſhall I here begin to tell you that little that I might, onely I ſay it is *Heaven*. *And*, as it is written, *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entred into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 9. And now, if thou art reſolved to ſtand faſt in the Lord, if thou wilt own thy profeſſed *Choice*, unto the death; take with thee this three-fold Cord, and gird up the loyns of thy mind with it; bind it upon thy heart, and let it be thy *Cable* in the Storm.

ἄρρητα ῥήματα. 2 Cor. 12. 4.

1. *Take heed of over-prizing the World.* Rate it not higher than thou art ſure to make on't. If God be come to deal with thee for it, be

be ſure, take him at his firſt *Offer*. Don't out-ask, nor out-ſit thy Market; convince thy ſelf of the real value of it. And, in order hereunto, conſider it, 1. *In its ſelf*. 2. *In the price offer'd for it*. *In its ſelf*, Wherein is it to be eſteemed farther than the bare uſe of it? and as for the uſe of it, this concerns the Body only directly, the Soul indirectly; neceſſary it is, as to thy natural Being, but not as to thy future happineſs; an old decaying *Poſt*, that may ſtand a while; and for no higher uſe than to prop up thy *working-houſe*, I had almoſt ſaid thy *Priſon-houſe*: nay, it ſits as a Nail in the door, to keep thee out of thy *Dwelling-houſe*. Lo! this is the *Palladium*, the *Pearl* of ſuch great worth! Conſider it again, *in the price offered for it*, Matth. 19. 29. *And every one that hath forſaken houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my names ſake, ſhall receive an hundred fold, and ſhall inherit everlaſting life*. Here's a Trade for wiſe Merchants, that are complaining they know not wherein to deal to get a penny; here's an *Enſuring Office*, that ſhall ſecure thee an hundred pounds for the adventure of one. With whom canſt thou deal elſe in all the world, at ſuch an advantage? And if this be not enough, there is thy *Life* ſettled on an *Everlaſting inheritance*. Nay, believe it, Brethren, Chriſt makes the leaſt on't; Give me but thy ſelf, ſayes God, and I will give thee my ſelf; give me all thou haſt, and I will give thee all I have; let me command thee and thine,

thine, (which yet is but my own, and my proper right, and ever under my absolute disposé) and thou shalt *command* both me and mine; Isa. 45.11. let me have this Earth at my use, and thou shalt have both it and Heaven too, at thy use and service for ever. On this account it was, that St. *Paul* cryes out, *Phil.* 3. 8. *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledg of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.* O my brethren! are you like to lose by such a bargain? O, whence is it then that every *Shop* is full but God's? that every other trade is ambitiously sued, or patiently served for, and this only goes a begging? None but the worlds fools have wit enough to adventure this way.

Ay, but your worldly hearts would say, might they but speak out; We may look long enough for this: A little in hand is better than a great deal more at such a distance. *Ob.*

This I shall answer briefly, but as fully as I can. *Answ.*

1. *Though it be future, yet it is sure.* Thou hast the word of a God for it, who is truth it self, and cannot lie. Nay, thou hast his *Hand* and *Seal* for it; his Word, his Covenant, and all the Promises and Priviledges of them ratified and sealed with his own Seal of *Divine Inspiration* and Institution, and that in the blood of the Lamb, *in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen*, 2 *Cor.* 1, 20. What thou hast

haſt not yet in thy hand, is certainly forthcoming.

2. *Thou art ſure to have it into hand as thou haſt real need on't.* It is not for the credit of a Father to let his children go naked and famiſht, unleſs it be in order to ſome greater good; though I might interpoſe, by the way, that God ſeldome or never turns out any ſtark naked. *Nemo tam pauper vivit quam natus eſt.* The Covenant of Grace hath provided as well for this life, as for the life to come. *I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not ſeen the righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed begging bread*, Pſal. 37. 23. *He hath given meat to them that fear him, he will ever be mindful of his Covenant*, Pſal. 111. 5.

Ob. But we often ſee the deareſt of Gods children in lack, and that not only of conveniencies, but even of neceſſaries; 'tis a common Caſe.

Anſw. *Let God be true, and every man a lyar.* Men are not held to be competent Judges in their own caſe. Thy *Parum*, may be *Satis* in God's Tranſlation. Though they be ſometimes *without* conveniencies, yet 'tis *improper*, I had almoſt ſaid, *falſe*, to ſay they *want* them, for *there is no want to them that fear him*, Pſal. 34. 9. This Scripture is the word of God, and therefore true. If there be any want, 'tis from within, not from above; miſtake not, Chriſtian, 'tis the Ship moves, not the Shoar. I hope you confeſs that that is not neceſſary that God doth not ſee neceſſary: Well then, can it poſſibly

bly consist with his glorious Attributes, to see any thing really necessary *pro hic & nunc*, and yet deny it to such as are in Covenant with him, when he hath plainly asserted, and faithfully engaged the contrary?

3. Nay, let me add, *This hundred-fold encrease thou hast already*; and that not only in the promise and title, but in the possession. *Mar.* 10. 29, 30. Here you have a large Edition of the fore-cited Text: *Verily, I say unto you*, Here's the Oath, *there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold: now in this time, houses, and sisters, &c. with persecutions*; that is, He that shall leave Lands, or Relations, &c. for my sake, shall find as good again another where. Strangers shall be to him as Father and Mother, &c. as tender, as careful, as friendly, as those Relations he left. Their houses shall be his houses, and their lands his lands. These are your persecution-Fathers, and your persecution-Brethren, the Relations begotten in, and by your bonds, the lands and houses purchased by your poverty and want; as God dealt with *Joseph*. *Gen.* 39. 4. *And Joseph found grace in his sight.* Here *Joseph* found the Father and Brethren which he had lost: Thus in the same kind; and yet if this be not enough, or if it be not alway made up this way, yet be sure it shall in that better part: if thou be not paid in Counters, thou shalt in Gold. Godliness with

contentment, Godliness in all its Consequen
or Appurtenances; Persecutions with conten
ment is great gain. That *little*, that *never-so-litt*
that a righteous man hath, is better than th
riches of many wicked, Psal. 37. 16. *Better is*
dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled Ox
and hatred therewith, Prov. 15. 17. I might s
forth the vastness of the over-plus of this advan
tage, both in respect of the Nature, and th
Measure of it; but I must not Digress to
farre.

Clear up thy Assurance of Gods good-wi
to thee. 'Twill be a hard matter to suffer long,
to suffer much, for One, of whose special love y
are not well and convincingly perswaded. Her
is asserted the superlative Excellency and commen
dation of the love of Christ, that *he dyed f*
Enemies, Rom. 5. 8. But 'twill be hard for y
to think of this Cup: I am not of their mind,
own not such thing as the Doctrine of Assuranc
but would cut God's *Standard*, and reduce it u
to Antichrist's *Pack*. Neither am I of their Pe
swasion, who make Assurance the *Genus* of Jus
fying Faith; These are the *Scylla* and *Charyb*
dis, which have slain their thousands, nay, ten
ten thousands. Nor shall I digress so farr, as
insist on the confutation of either: onely thi
say, *Give diligence to make your Calling and E*
lection sure; as the Apostle exhorts, 2 *Pet.* 1.
For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. Ma
your *Calling* and *Election*, *Chains*, firm and s
ble. Not *Objective*; For the Foundation of G
standeth sure, 2 *Tim.* 2. 19. *Election* is *Elec*

on, and *Calling* is *Calling*, whether we know it or no; neither is it founded on *opera pravisa*, or *peracta*. But *Subjectivè*, *That ye may believe, and be sure*; ἐγνώκαμεν, as St. *John* speaks, *Joh. 6. 69.* that ye may certainly know, and fully testifie your *Calling* and *Election*. And that this is the truth of this Scripture; Observe, first, his *Inversion*; not *Election* and *Calling*, in their natural Order, but *Calling* and *Election*, *q. d.* Make evidence of your *Election* by your *Calling*; and then give diligenceto make it sure. ἀνουδάσατε [ἵνα διὰ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων as *Steph. Divers. lect.*]: *for if ye do these things*, (before advised and enjoyned, *ver.* 5, 6, 7.) *you shall never fall*; not only from your Elected and Justified *Estate*, but not from any proportionable and comfortable *sense* of it: Keep the *Clouds* of sin from interposing; keep the lower *Regions* clear, and the Sun shall cast thy *shade* in the way wherein thou art walking. As ever thou hopest to find that *Cordial* at the Bottom, and to hold out with Courage and Patience till the spoyls shall come to be divided; get some infallible Evidences, that thy Captain's heart is with thee. Alas! Christian, thou art little aware, of what use *Love* will be in hard service. Now thou lovest, but considerest not what standing Pledges and Reciprocations thy love hath gotten from above; onely thou hast thy ease, thy health, thy liberty: God hath made a *hedge* about thee, and thou art not *serving him for nought*; thou hast thy Priviledges, and Spiritual Advantages in common with others; the same Sun that is shining on the wicked, shines on thee too. These are

to thee some tokens of Fatherly Love and care, o
the account of Covenant-Interest and Relation
Ay, but when thy *Goshen* is become a *wilderne*
and these tokens cease, what infallible Evidenc
hast thou then, on which thou canst boldly ca
thy Body, and Soul, and Hopes and all! If eve
you fall, it's like to be under your *burden*, or ove
some *Rock of offence*: and now that your ol
Staff is broken, what have you to trust to? C
keep in with God; give diligence to mak
your Calling and Election sure, and so, *Ye*
shall not, not at any time fall, οὐ μὴ πταίσητέ ποτε.

3. *Examine, and prove the strength of thy Gra*
ces. Hast thou nothing to try thy Faith and Pa
tience with? no smaller Burdens to begin with
no broken Papers to try thy Pen upon? *Tauru*
feret, qui Vitulum tulit. *Take on thy whole Ar*
mour, and prove it; thou art called to fight fo
thy life; this is it must defend thee, or thou mu
dye for't. Thine *Armour* is invulnerable,
thou knowest how to use it. Young Souldiers, th
have only the *Theorie* of Arms, will find them
selves miserably to seek, when they come
Practice. Hast thou no Personal troubles,
Family-Crosses, no Scorns nor Contempt, no
that Wrong thee, or Speak Evil of thee, no Pai
no Disease, no Fear art thou in, *no trouble*
other men? If thou hast no burden considerab
of thy own; hast thou no assisting work offer'd
Are there none of thy poor brethren overladen
thee, whose *burden* thou art commanded to *bear*
Gal. 6. 2. Try now what thy Faith and Pa
ence, thy Humility and Self-denial, thy Ho
an

and Charity will do, in these common and lesser cases. It may be thou art hoping to hold out well enough at last, and in greater Trials to stand thy ground with the best. O consider! how sadly thou wilt befool thy self? *First*, He that will not serve in his own *File*, whereunto he is called, may look to be disbanded, and cast out of the Service for ever, like one of *Gideon's* supernumerary Cowards; and what then? *He that is not with me, is against me. Secondly*, It argues thy mercenary hopes, as well as thy slavish fear; and what thou dost at last (should'st thou make good thy glorying) would appear to proceed from no Love or Loyalty to thy Captain or to thy Cause; but a servile, and base fear, of losing the glory, or advantage of the Victory: and how little art thou like to be thankt for such service? *Lastly*, It seems very irrational, nay, somewhat impossible, to bring thy boasting to pass. For, *If thou hast run with the Footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?* Jer. 12.5. How canst thou think to bear blows, that art not able to stand under a frown? Is the greater more tolerable than the less? Sure, if *a minori ad majus* be true arguing, thou wilt be deceived. Thou art commanded to *lay aside every weight* (that hinders thee) *and run with Patience*, Heb. 12.1. and dost thou think to tugg it along, till thy back break under it, and the *Prize* be won? What will running avail thee when the *Race* is over? Once behind hand, and ever behind hand. When thy Vessel is full, and begins to

sink, then 'twill be time to shuffle thy undoing wares over-board.

Doct. 2. *That the Afflictions wherewith God Exerciseth his People, are but Rods.*

I have gone beyond my purpose on the first *Doctrine*, therefore shall be the more succinct here; where I have but these three things to do: 1. I shall shew you that they are Rods, and but Rods. 2. What Rods they are. 3. Apply it.

That they are Rods, and but Rods, appears;

1. *Because they are so called in Scripture.* *Psal.* 89. 32. *Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes;* and *Psal.* 125. 3. *The rod of the wicked shall not rest on the lot of the righteous;* and *Isa.* 10. 5. *O Assyrian! the Rod of mine Anger, &c.*

2. *God useth them to no other end* about his people, but as Rods. *Solomon* tells us what the end and use of the Rod is, *Prov.* 22. 15. *Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it from him.* This is the very design of the Rod in Question. *Zion shall be plowed like a field*---Jer. 26. 18. You know what Plowing means, though it be to lay the field *fallow* a while, yet it is in order to a Crop. The Plow is an Instrument of Husbandry; where we see God's Plow, we may conclude he intends both the Seed and the Harvest in their Season. I know, there is a vast odds between διωρθωσις and τιμωρια, *amending* and *avenging*; curing and curling of a

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Person or People; but we are speaking of such afflictions as are common to the people of God, as such, whether personal or natural: of which the Apostle speaks, *Heb.* 12. 10, 11. *For they verily, for a few dayes, chastened us after their own pleasure; but he, for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness: for no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.*

3. *God dealeth with the Instruments as with Rods.* When the Child is sufficiently beaten, the Rod is burnt, or laid aside. 2 *Thess.* 1. 6. *It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.* This was the end of the *Egyptian rod*, as you may read at large, *Exod.* 14. So God dealt with the *Assyrian*, the rod of his Anger, *Isa.* 10. 27. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder; and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.* When Gods areing time is over, he will burn the yoke, that sate too heavy, and gall'd the necks of his children: when the *long Furrows* are turn'd, and the seed is in, and covered; he will drive off the *Beasts*, and they shall oppress no more, but be *fed for the day of slaughter.*

2. The second thing proposed, was, to shew you what Rods these are; This I shall do under these three heads.

1. *In themselves.*

2. *With relation to our sins.*

3. *In respect of Gods ends in them.*

In themselves, they may be,

1. *Sharp rods. No chastening for the present*, or in its self, *seemeth joyous, but grievous.* Affliction is the burden and distress of Nature. Every *Cross* hath its *nails* with it, according to its kind and degree: yet God hath some greater and sharper than others, that will not only scratch the skin, but tear the flesh, and break the bones. All his rods are not of a size; that he may proportion himself to the strength of the Offendent, and the height of the Offence. God may set a *Bramble* over thee, and hedge thee about with *Thorns*. Wonder not, Christian, if the Rod smart, that is dipt in the Guilt of sin, and Divine displeasure.

2. *Long Rods.* Such as may reach over all thy comforts, all thy hopes, all thy contentments. Such was *Job's* case, trouble on every hand, within door and without. God may lay thee out in such a storm, as shall swill thee from head to foot, and leave thee never a dry thread; nay, he may wrap up thy spiritual peace in the same plight too, and make thee cry out with *David*, *All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me*, Psal. 42. 7. The Cloud may overspread thy whole *Horizon*, in all the parts and dimensions of it. Sometimes God cuts his Rod so long, that it shall reach from thy Cradle to thy Grave; nay, he hath a rod that is as long as Eternity it self; which is the rod he hath laid up for his Enemies.

3. *Strong rods.* Such as thou canst neither stand

ſtand againſt, nor ſtand under: that will make thee yield and ſtoop to them. *Heavineſs in the heart of man maketh it ſtoop*, Pro. 12. 25. God may bring ſuch an evil upon thee, and lay his *Siege* ſo cloſe at thee, *that thou ſhalt not be able to eſcape*; as he threatned *Jerem.* 11. 11, *The weakneſs of God is ſtronger than men*, 1 Cor. 1. 25. Who can contend with the Almighty, or quench the flames of *Conſuming fire? He is wiſe in heart, and mighty in ſtrength; Who hath hardned himſelf againſt him, and hath proſpered?* Job 9. 4. God will draw his arrow ſo deep, that it ſhall be ſure to reach home, and ſtrike its mark: though ten thouſands ſtand in his way; though Earth and Hell conſpire with their utmoſt skill and power, yet there's no reſiſting of his abſolute will and purpoſe; nor turning him from his deſigned end or means. Both his work and his way are irreſiſtable.

2. *With relation to our ſins*; they are,

1. *Short rods.* Sin is of an infinite extent: had not God ſet its bounds, it would run parallel with eternity. Nay, in ſome reſpect, it is actually as endleſs as eternity it ſelf. For, though there be no ſinning in Hell, as ſin hath reference to the Law, it being Gods *Goal*, and therefore exempt from the Law: *And Sin is not imputed where there is no Law.* Rom. 5. 13. But, as ſin is the depraved habit of the mind, and the ἀνομία of the whole Soul, it accumulates in that eſtate of eternal ſeparation from God, and riſes to its higheſt *Zenith*; ſo that thoſe that were bad before, are now unconceivably worſe. *Let him that is filthy, be filthy ſtill.* The Covetous never ſo greedy, as now; The unclean never burn'd, as now; The envious

vious never gnasht the teeth as now: and yet the Objects of those lusts at an unaccessible distance: *the gulf is fixt*, which doubtless is no small part of their torment. I should speak more fully here, but that it is plainly out of my way. That which I aim at, is, to measure the Rod with Sin, the Sire and Progenitor of it; and we find that the *Giant* hath begotten a *Dwarf*. Sin hath seiz'd on every faculty, and lies in every joynt: but the Rod hits but in one, or some few parts at once. The yoke lies but on the neck. The Disease is *universal*, yet the Vein is open'd but *in puncto*. Nay, Sin is a *complicated* evil, a *Bundle* of different *Species*; some, in the seeds onely; others, both in the root and branch. But the Rod is wont to come single: God doth not heap up misery, as we heap up iniquity; *He punisheth*, in this world, *seven times*, nay, seven thousand times *less than our iniquities do deserve*.

2. *Light Rods. Our light affliction which is but for a moment*, &c. 2 Cor. 4. 17. God may lay more upon thee, than thou art willing to bear; but not more than thou art enabled to bear. More than thou beareſt with Patience: but not more than Patience would bear. Thou hast no reason to shrink from, or sink under thy burden, till God lay on the burden of thy sin, either in the *Guilt*, or in the *full demerit of it*. This indeed is a weight, which none but he that was *God* as well as *Man* could ever bear. Nay, see how it stretcht the very Cords of his Soul, as it were, to stand up under it. Hear, how God himself complains of it, *Amos* 2. 13. *Behold, I am prest*

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sed under you, as a Cart is pressed that is full of sheaves. O my brethren! never complain that God hath laid on you his *little-finger*, when he might have crusht you with his *Loyns*.

3. *In respect of God's ends in them*; they are,

1. *Teaching Rods. The rod and reproof give Wisdom*, Prov. 29. 15. The rod is Gods pen wherewith he writes his Law, and our duty, on the fleshy Tables of our hearts. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes*, Psal. 119. 71. *It is good*; the Affliction is over, but the Good remains. The good that is in other things, dyes with them; Health, Wealth, Peace, Friends, and all those things that contribute to the sweetness of a natural life, are good but while they are enjoyed, unless that good be sanctified by a faithful and successful improvement of them to their spiritual uses and ends. There are thousands in Hell, that are cursing the day that ever they were born to such Estates, and arriv'd to such Honours, and liv'd at such Ease: these things were once taken to be good, nay, the only good; but now that the other side is turn'd up, and upon deliberate review, they are not like the things they were. Thus the Devil cheats poor Souls, with a fair *Image* on the one side, but plain *Brass* on the other. *But it is good for me that I have been afflicted*; The *Cross* lay uppermost, but the *Crown* was under; and true Gold on both sides; Golden afflictions, and Golden glory. *That I might learn*

learn thy Statutes. These are Mysteries that the Worlds-Disciples are ignorant of. Indeed, they pretend to great Matters, great Learning, and high Parts, men of vast Reading, and piercing Wits; and yet they dye *Fools* at last, and their Wits pierce themselves. But, *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy Law.* Psal. 94. 12.

2. *Establishing rods. Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.* Psal. 119. 67. The shaking of the tree strengthens the root. When I liv'd at ease, and every thing was, as, I thought, I would have it: when I felt no pain, and saw no trouble: I was wandring and gadding after every temptation, my foot was in every snare, and one *swallowed-Bait* engaged me for another. I was beating up and down the streets like a *truant* child, that had no Guardian nor Governour, but his own *Will.* But now, since thou hast fetcht me in with thy whip; since thou hast been dealing with me by such or such an affliction or cross: since I have smarted under thy rod, the case hath been happily altered with me: *I have kept thy word.* O Christian! thou canst not think how much thou art indebted unto God for his Rod.

3. *Comforting Rods.* This is a Mystery to the poor blind World. What! Affliction the way to Comfort? Trouble the way to Peace? Liberty the fruit of Banishment? *Meat out of the Eater, and Sweetness out of the Strong?* This is a *Riddle, how can these things be?* Alas, they are people of another *Climate*, that can't live by such *herbs*; no, nor yet *by Faith.* What can com-

comfort them, when the heart of their comfort is broken? What, or who can bless them, when their *Gods* are *spoiled*? *Ye have taken away my Gods, and what have I more?* Judg. 18. 24. If these fail, they are undone. This is their *Main chance*, their *Portion*, their *All*. In and by this Element they live. 'Tis true, they have some other things to discourse of now and then, but 'tis that they can't live on. *When they saw the boldness of Peter and John,---they marvelled*, Act. 4. 13. 'Tis a wonder to them to see the *Bush* in a flame, and yet not burnt: to see men in the fire, and yet not consumed: among Lions, and yet not devoured. But, sayes *David*, *Thy rod, and thy staff, they comfort me*, *Psal.* 23. 4. No Comforts like to Affliction-comforts: This is *the Sword of Goliah the Philistim, wrapt in a cloth behind the Ephod; there is none like it.* The highest wages are reserved for the hardest service. *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ*, 2 Cor. 1. 5. The *Vessel* never rides better than on *Spring-tides*, when the waters are highest. O how sweet are *Prison-Cordials!* how pleasant are his looks, when darted through the blackest Cloud! Oh what light is there in *the flaming furnace*, when God is there too! What? *smell* is there in his *Distilling-house*; how sweet are the *Roses* when the *fire* is under! But I cannot stay here; I must hasten. 1 *Sam* 1. 9.

4. *Feeding Rods.* Gods children never begin to prove, till they fall on *Pulse and Water*. *Feed thy people with thy rod*, Mich. 7. 14. And in this sense we may call it, *the Bread of adversity, and the Water of affliction*, Isa. 30. 20. which are as

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absolutely necessary (though not *per se*, but *per accidens*, and as the case stands) unto our spiritual life and growth, as bread and water are to our natural. Alas, Christian! Thou canst not live without sufferings. You say, *'Tis pity that fair weather should ever hurt.* But it's certain, a continual *Summer* would wither thee, *branch and root*; the Winter must succeed in its course, or thou must dye. This necessity proceeds not from the Arbitrariness of Gods Sovereign dispose, but from thy own temper and constitution. God is not like those Physicians that covet to inrich themselves by their Customers, and will physick them right or wrong, that they may *live* upon them, though their poor Patients *dye* under them. Oh, 'tis well for us, that we have to do with a God, that knows how to chastise us *in Judgment, and in measure*, and will correct the poysonous *Ingredients* of the *Fury and Envy* of unreasonable men: that will *pare* his rod, lest it should fall too heavy, or too many wayes at once. *Surely, the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain*, Psal. 76. 10.

5. *Improving rod. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*, Joh. 15. 2. God doth not onely lopp off the dry boughs, but pares to the green, and this is the way to make a fruitfull tree more fruitful. That tree onely is in good case, that is full of fruit, let the husbandry be what it will. Affliction is the wa-

ring

tring of Gods Garden; though the drops may fall so heavy and thick, that they may beat all flat to the ground, as if it should never rise more; yet it quickly recovers, and with the freshest vigour and beauty. What an odour doth there result from every odoriferous herb, in its nature and kind, after a soaking shower? Every Grace thrives under a sanctified Rod. Humility never lookt like its self till now. Heavenly-mindedness had never such a face, as now that it is bathed in its own tears, from the filth and pollution of this Earth. Faith was never so active and clear-sighted: Patience never so strong as the *Ancles*: Charity was never so heart-whole as now, that God hath *diseased* them with his rod. The Judgment never so settled; The Will never so deliberately resolv'd; The Conscience never so tender and clear; The Affections never in such a posture and temper; The Temple of the heart never so kept as now, that God hath made a *scourge of small cords*, and driven out all those *Merchants* that held their *Exchange* there. *Joh. 2. 14.*

Stellæ nocte splendent quæ die non videntur. Bern.

Hitherto for the *Doctrinal part*: Let me apply it now, for

Information.
Exhortation.
Consolation.

A word to each of these, and so I proceed.

If this be so, Then the wicked are sadly deceived; and that, *use* 1.

1. *In themselves. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so.* For he saith,

Are

are not my Princes altogether Kings? Isa. 10. 7, 8. *with our tongues we will prevail. Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?* Psal. 12. 4. Alas, Sinner! this is thy day, and it is but a day. Mistake not, thou art but a Rod, though it hath pleased the Father to set thee on high in his house, for the terrour of his children; thy use is no longer than while the child is *under age*, when once the *Heir* is of *years*, this penal Discipline shall cease for ever: and then all thine arrows shall return on thine own head, tipt with that vengeance that thy *Pride* and *Cruelty* hath deserved.

2. *In the people of God.* They are not the persons thou takest, and accusest them for: the *Fools*; the *Hypocrites*, the *Troublers of Israel*. *The World knoweth us not.—Now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him*, 1 Joh. 3. 1, 2. Oh Sinners! what will ye say, when ye shall see those, whom now ye hate and persecute, and brand with hypocrisie and sedition, coming in the Clouds, and in the Glory and Power of their Father, to pass Sentence and Judgment upon you? *Do ye not know, that the Saints shall judge the World?* 1 Cor. 6. 2. Go on then, arraign, condemn, execute; *But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment*, Eccles. 11. 9. *For a good work*, say they, *we stone thee not; but for Blasphemy*, &c. Joh. 10. 33. But wilt thou adventure thy soul on it, that thou art not mistaken? Was not *Saul* once of thy mind, before

fore God from Heaven convinc'd him what he was doing? He little thought it had been Christ he was persecuting. Oh! don't thy Conscience sometimes tell thee, when thy Interest and Malice is at an *Ebb*; that the Question deserves thy better consideration, whether it be *Dagon* or the *Ark*, thou art fighting against? the *Fox* or the *Lamb*, thou art hunting and smiting? *Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service*, Joh. 16. 2. 'Twere very strange indeed, if any one should think to do Christ a service, in destroying his Members, *eo nomine*: but, under other notions and accusations. Well Sinner! if thou will not debate the case now, God himself shall shortly debate it with thee, and shall judg uprightly between us.

Now to the people of God. Is all that you complain of, and groan under, but a Rod, and such a rod? then be exhorted, *Use* 2.

1. *To bear the rod.* Nay, you must bear it: The yoke is pinn'd-on, that it cannot be shaken off. But that you may not lose your labour, and hopes, bear it,

1. With Faith: the affiance, confidence, and acquiescence of Faith.

2. With Patience.

3. With Resolution.

4. With Joy.

5. With Perseverance. *Matth.* 16. 24. *Then said Jesus unto his Disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me.* If you will be Chri-

stians, you must bear the Cross; and for your help and encouragement consider,

1. *'Tis the Cross of Christ.* He hath born it before you; He hath born it for you; He bears it in you; He layes it on you: And in his time, He, and he alone, can and will take it from you.

2. *'Tis thy Cross.* The burden that is weighed out for thee. The *rod appointed thee*: there is a necessity, *& præcepti, & medii*; and thou must bear it.

3. *'Tis a gainful, though a painful Cross*: like *Æsop's Load*; the *burden* that threatens thy death, is the *bread* that maintains thy life.

4. *'Tis an honourable*, though a dishonoured Cross. The *Vexillum & Insigna Christi. I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*, Gal. 6. 17. The wounds and scars of a Souldier, are the visible witnesses of his valour: and his valour the Crown of his honour.

5. *'Tis a Victorious Cross.* In this War the conquered conquers, and patience only wins the field. *Christianos victores evadere, dum mori malunt pro sua Religione quàm Imperatoris edictis parere. That the Christians became Conquerours, while they chose to dye for their Religion, rather than to obey the Edicts of the Emperours*; was confest by an *Heathen Emperour* himself.

Patiendo non resistendo, Aug. Euseb. l 4. Hist. c. 13.

Anton. Imp.

2. *To kiss the rod. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry*, Psal. 2. 12. Kissing imports Salutation, or welcom entertaining of a person, or thing; voluntary submission to it; and a full and free reconciliation with it. Can you? will you, this

kiss

kiſs the rod, not only in the Author, or Efficient, but in the Inſtruments, or ſecond Cauſes of it? It is not ſufficient, that the child kiſs his Father that corrects him, but he muſt kiſs the rod too. But to prevent an Objection or a Miſtake here, I muſt add, That God doth not expect, nay, he will not, that his children ſhould kiſs the rod, on any other account, but as they are rods in their Fathers hands: *Have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs*, nor with the workers themſelves, farther than the Law of God and Nature do allow, or the Chriſtian duty toward their Souls requires. Take heed of ſtriking hands with the *Gibeonites*; of complying, or compounding with the rod.

3. *To improve the Rod.* To this end, walk with God under it, and wait upon God in it. When the Streams run foul below, draw up to the Fountain, and dwell there. If the *Floods* be upon the Earth, repair, with the *Dove, to the Ark*, where thou mayſt be at reſt; Walk with God in his way, and by his Rule, when he is not pleaſed to walk with thee in thy way, and by thy rule; Then is the rod improv'd, when it touches with God's deſign. You have heard, they are Teaching Rods; oh, learn by them! Eſtabliſhing Rods; oh, take root under them! Comforting Rods; oh, ſuck out the marrow of theſe bones! Feeding Rods; oh, ſhut not the mouth too faſt againſt them! Let them in, and let them down, and digeſt them, when God offers them; and ſo your growth and improvement ſhall abundantly appear. I am fain to poſt

poſt over theſe things, that I may not be prevented in what I chiefly aim at.

Uſe 3. If it be but a Rod, and the Rod of Fatherly Diſcipline and Love; then, Chriſtian, let me offer theſe three rich Cordials to refreſh thy ſpirits in ſuch a caſe.

1. *It proves thy Adoption. And in nothing terrified by your Adverſaries, which is to them an evident token of Perdition; but to you of Salvation; and that of God*, Phil. 1. 28. *If ye endure chaſtning, God dealeth with you, as with ſons: for what ſon is he whom the Father chaſteneth not?* Heb. 12. 7.

Ob. But *Solomon* tells us, that *no man knoweth* Eccleſ. 9. 1. *love or hatred, by all that is before him.* How then ſhall I know, what, or when afflictions are concluſive of Adoption?

Anſw. 1. 'Tis true, God is not wont to ſet his Seal to *Blanks*; but where Adoption is, this is one Seal or Evidence of it. *No man knoweth either love or hatred, by all that is before him*: if he hath nothing elſe to know it by, this is no adæquate, but an aſſiſtant, or completive Evidence.

2. Theſe Evidences are not ſo diſcernable *Coming*, as *Going*. When *David* had gotten through, he looks back, and concludes: *It is good for me, that I have been afflicted.* We may judge ſomething from the *Cauſe*, for which; and the *Inſtruments* by which, we ſuffer: but moſt ſafely, from the work, and operation of them; the manner, nature, and fruit of their working. Then doth the *Phyſick* promiſe

Recovery, when it kindly works upon, and forcibly works off the Cauſe of the Diſeaſe. The teaching, eſtabliſhing, comforting, feeding, improving, and improved Rod, is the reſtoring, and ſealing Rod. But when it works the contrary, as, on too many it doth, and, like the *Troubled Sea, caſts up mire and dirt*: or but at halves; when it ſtirs the *Pool*, and cauſeth ſin to come in remembrance, and makes the Soul, it may be, ſtomach-ſick, but carries it not off; in this caſe, in this ſad caſe, it ſeals too; but, as to thine *Adverſaries*, It is an *evident token of perdition*.

2. *It ſeals to thy Portion.* It is a faithful ſaying, *For if we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him; if we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him*, 2 Tim. 2. 11. 12. *Behold, we have forſaken all, and followed thee*, ſayes *Peter*, *what ſhall we have therefore? Verily, I ſay unto you*, ſayes Chriſt, *that ye which have followed me in the Regeneration*, in the work, the duties, and difficulties of Regeneration, *when the ſon of man ſhall ſit in the throne of his Glory, ye alſo ſhall ſit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Iſrael*, Matth. 19. 27, 28. This is the day of thy labour, and every ſtroke thou ſtrikeſt in it, is in *earneſt* of thy *Reſt*. As ſure as thou ſeeſt the Sun ſhining in the Heavens, the Evening is at hand, which ſhall crown thy dayes work. *For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work, and labour of love, which ye have ſhewed toward his name*, Heb. 6. 10. Bear up your ſpirits then; He that hath eſpouſed you, will

shortly marry you, and celebrate your blessed and glorious *Nuptials*, in the house, and kingdom of his Father, for ever. O the ravishing Songs! the joyful *Epithalamiums* that shall then be sung! He that hath hired you, will surely and fully reward you; when you shall *know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his Inheritance in the Saints*, Eph. 1. 18. Though thou art sweating, toyling, suffering, sighing, weeping now; by this thou mayest know, that thy *rest remaineth*.

3. *It works for thy good. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose*, Rom. 8. 28. All these things which seem to be *against thee*, are directly making for thee. God is now *emptying thee from vessel to vessel, that thou mayest not settle on thy lees: that thy* (old) *tast may not remain in thee: that thy scent may be changed*; and thou mayest be prepared for the *Cup*, and *Table* of his Glory. He would never thus *winnow* and *grind* thee, but that he might have thee nearer to him; and make of thee, *Savoury meat, such as he loveth*, and feast himself with thee to all eternity. Nay, it makes for thy present good; The tryed Silver is now *Current Coyn*; and they that scrupled at it before, that call'd it *Brass*, base, and counterfeit *Metal*; that scour'd it, cut it, and curst it, and blasphem'd the sacred *Stamp*, and *Coiner* of it; are now asham'd of themselves,

and

and glad would they be, like the Foolish Virgins, *of some of your oyl.* I might here tell you more at large, how the Lords rod, and every branch of it, as all the Occurrences of his Providence, are working together for the good of them that love him, both in respect of the design and event. But this hath been the happy labour of a far abler *Pen* already, whereunto I refer you, and shall add no more here. *Matth.* 25. 8. *Mr. R. A.*

That there is no affliction can light on the people of God, without his divine permission and appointment. *Doc.* 3.

But I intend not to insist here, only give me leave to make good what I have said; which I shall do in the mouth of these two Witnesses: *Matth.* 10. 29, 30. *Are not two Sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your heads are all numbred.* And then he concludes, *à majore, Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more worth than many Sparrows.* If a *Sparrow*, which, in buying and selling, is valued but at *half a Farthing*; nay, if *a hair of our heads*, which is but an excrementitious *Appendix* to the body, can't be any way disposed of, without the all-commanding Counsel of Heaven; doubt not, Christian, but that thy higher affairs, thy greater concernments either of Body or Soul, are under special appointment and designation. Hath he such care of *Sparrows?* and will he forget his *Doves?* Will he not lose a *hair* of thy head? and will he be prodigal of the pretious Jewels of his *royal*

Cant. 6. 9. *Isa.* 62. 3.

Crown and Diadem? Surely, he that guides thy *hairs* to the ground, will not suffer the Rod to fall, without special *Licence* and ordination, on thy back, *Isa.* 10. 23. *The Consumption decreed, shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a Consumption, even determined in the midst of all the Land.* Whoever, or whatever be the Instruments, they must work by Gods rule, and in Gods *determined*, though they cross his *prescribed* way.

Proceed we now to the last *Doctrine*, yet that which was the first in our eye.

Doc. 4. *That the Lords Rod is no dumb rod.* It is a speaking, pleading rod.

This we shall 1. Prove. 2. Interpret (as God shall enable) the Voice of it. 1. In General. 2. In Special. 3. We shall apply all very briefly.

Here are two Arguments coucht in the Text it self, to illustrate the ὅτι of this truth.

1. *The Lord cryes for Audience.* He hath now sent his Rod to plead his Quarrel, seeing his Prophets could not be heard; and now commands their attention to this his severer Messenger: *Hear ye the rod.* Which clearly implies, that it hath a Voice; nay, an intelligible, though in it self, an inarticulate Voice. His *Rod*, and his *Word*, are sometimes *Synonyma* in Scripture; as *Isa.* 11. 4. *He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.* God doth sometimes speak Rods, his Words do wound, and kill,

kill. When he rides forth, as St. *John* describes it, *Rev.* 19. 12, 13, 14, 15. *Cloathed with a vesture dipt in blood, and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron*, &c. And as he speaks rods, so his rod speaks and pleads with those unto whom it is sent.

2. The Text tells us, *that it is the Rod of divine and special appointment*; which argues the *End* and design of it; it is a designed, and a designing Rod. God doth not shoot his arrows at *Random*, without mark or aim; but he hath a *Wherefore* for every particular of his Providence. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*, 1 Cor. 11. 30. This is one main use God makes of his Rod, to point at his meaning by it, and to give us the sensible and visible *Characters* and *Emblems* of his mind. *God spake in divers manners in time past, unto the Fathers, by the Prophets*, saves the Apostle, *Heb.* 1. 1. *But hath in these last dayes spoken unto us by his Son.* And now, may I say, *in divers manners too.* Sometimes by his Word, in plain Scripture; sometimes by the explaining, or awakening Ministry of it; and that either in Doctrine or Reproof and Threatning; or in Promise and Incouragement; Sometimes by his Spirit, in the secret workings and whispers of it, in, and on the Conscience; and sometimes by his Rod; when our stupid Dulness, or perverse Carelesness is grown to such a pass, that other means and wayes are in-

ineffectual; then he takes up his rod, and points more plainly and convincingly at our duty, and engageth us in it, with the more fixed, and solemn resolution. Thus far the Text it self confirms its own truth: And let this serve at present to prove the Son of it.

I shall add but a word or two more, for the Demonstration of the Son: and so proceed to the Interpretation of the voice.

For Demonstration, or why the Lords Rod should have a Voice.

1. *For the glory of his Attributes.* Gods *Wisdom*, *Justice*, and *Mercy*, are highly concern'd in it. To think that Divine Dispensations are steer'd by a *blind Instinct* Necessity, or Casualty, without some gloriously designed, and determined *End*, is Atheistically to blaspheme his heavenly *Wisdom*. *Affliction cometh not forth of the dust*, Job 5. 6. God has a *Wheel within the wheel*; a wheel of infinite Counsel and Wisdom, which moves within the wheel of external Providence. *Deus & Natura nihil frustra agunt*. Nay, it would greatly derogate from the glory of his *Justice*, to exercise his *Rod*, without some proportionable *End*: For, (to speak with holy reverence) God is, as it were, bound in all his Divine Actions, to aim at his own Glory, because there is no higher End, for all Humane, Angelical, or Divine *Motions* to terminate in. And wherein is he glorified more than in the high Exploits, and blessed Fruit of his Rod? This is, as it were, the *Scepter*, the *Faces* of his Kingdom, the *Coercive Laws* of his

his Government, and the great visible *Pillars* of his Jurisdiction over the sons of men. Now it is certain, that on the account of his absolute, and supreme Sovereignty, he may, without any violation of his Justice, dispose both of Us and Ours, as he pleases; neither is he bound to give us an Account of his wayes, any more than we are bound to give the Worms we tread on an account of ours. He might deal with us with dumb blows, and never stand to reason the case with us. He once gave us both *to know, to will and Obey*; and dare we think to enjoyn him to look up, or repair what we have lost or spoi'd? Though we have pluckt out the *eyes* he gave us to see with, and stopt the *ears* he gave us to hear with, may he not in Justice require it at our hands? and that, not only by a *Precept*, but a *Penal Law*? Yet, such is the blessed Commendation, and condescention of his Grace and Mercy, that he will plead with us before he strikes; nay, and his very *Rod* shall speak, and that in such a *Dialect*, as our poor, broken capacities may in some certain and saving manner apprehend.

2. *To reach his Ends.* God's End is not barely to manifest the greatness of his Almighty Power, nor the severity of his Supreme Justice, in crushing in pieces the poor Potsheards of the earth; but to reduce his degenerate, fallen Creatures, to a nearer Resemblance, and fuller participation of that Blessed Image of his own, which he had at first enstamped on them. *Man* was the *Epiteme* of Gods six dayes work, the

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Microcosm, the little World, the *Crown* of his Creation: Therefore, when *Man* fell, this little World was ruin'd, and became a *Chaos*, a confused, and dark heap of all manner of hellish, and rebellious Principles and Practices: so that ever since, God hath been on a New-Creation-work in the World, *Eph.* 2. 10. and 2 *Cor.* 5. 17. *compar'd* with *Joh.* 5. 17. And in this his *new* work he observes his *old* method; First, he creates Light to work in, though not to work by: Light for his creature's sake, but not for his own. God is now working on rational creatures, which must, in some measure, and in some sense, co-operate, or work with him; what will serve again of the *old ruines*, must stand, as for the matter and substance of it: the old Faculties and Powers, New-wrought and Sanctified unto a *new*, yet its *primitive*, Order and Service. Now, I say, the case being thus, it would not seem so conducible to his End, to leave his creatures utterly in the dark, as to his mind and pleasure, in and by such Providences; for his Rod is as his Axe or Saw, to lessen, or shorten, or shape us in any manner, for the place and use he hath decreed, and called us unto, and under these, we are not to be meerly *passive*, but *active* also. Let this suffice now to have been spoken, by way of confirmation of so plain and evident a Truth.

2. Well, this, we hope, is sufficiently manifest, both from the light of Reason, Scripture, and Conscience, *that the Lords Rod hath a Voice.* But what this Voice is, or how to give

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the true and infallible *Interpretation*, is the *Question*: and were this Question as earnestly, impartially, and practically debated and resolved, as the *Mint* and *Rue*, the lesser *Circumstantials* and *Punctilios* of the *Law*, or of private and worldly *Interest*; there were some probable hope, nay, more than probable, that God might yet at last obtain the *Glory* he is contending, and we the happy *peace* and *salvation*, we are looking and longing for. And for your help in this diligent and serious Search, give me leave to premise these four things.

1. Know therefore, in the first place, That when God speaks to us by his Rod, he speaks as to *Rational* creatures, that are capable of drawing Inferences, as well from his *works*, as from his *word*. God doth not work upon us as upon Stocks and Stones, that are *supposed* utterly insensible of the Stroaks, and ignorant of the Workman's design; God hath principled us with an *intellective* Faculty, that we might conclude concerning his *will* from his *works*. Hence is that compassionate wish, *Deut.* 32. 29. *O that they were wise! that they understood this! that they would consider their latter end!* And that sad complaint, *Isa.* 1. 3. *Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.* Though I should *heap mischiefs upon them, and spend mine arrows upon them*; though *the sword without, and terrour within*, should *destroy both the young man, and the virgin, the suckling also, with the man of gray hairs*; yet

who

who would lay it to heart? the *filthy* would be *filthy* still, the *wicked and deceivers* would grow worse and worse still; *For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them.* 'Tis true, we are sensible enough of the Smart of the Rod, but not of the End, and Design of it. In other things, that, comparatively, little or nothing concern us, we can, with an elaborate, and studied exactness, run through the whole *Series* and concatenation of *propinque* and *remote* causes, and examine their mutual dependences and products; and yet how strangely blind and sottish are we in the case between God and our souls? Oh! whenever there is an evil in the *Camp*, a Judgment threatned, or inflicted, on the Church, State, Town, Family, wherein you live, or on your own Persons, or personal relations; let your next and speedy course be, to make diligent Inquisition to find out the *Achan* that hath mov'd the *Sedition*, and rais'd the *Controversie* between God and you; that he may not upbraid your wretched stupidity, as he did Israels, *Isa.* 1. 2. *Hear, O Heavens, and give ear, O Earth!* and verse 5. *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more.* And *Jer.* 6. 17. *Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the Trumpet; but they said, We will not hearken.* Here God threatned Warr, by the sound of the Trumpet, but all was one to them, *we will not hearken.* Therefore, ver. 19. *Hear, O Earth, Behold, I will bring evil upon this People, even the Fruit of their own thoughts, because they*

have not hearkened unto my words. Oh, my Brethren! As you desire, and hope to be saved from that Sword and Pestilence, and all the other evils that are upon you, or impendent over you, and from the wrath to come; hearken to the sound of Gods Trumpet, to the voice of Gods Rod: O, don't abandon your reason, and play the mad men in the things that do so nearly concern you! God is now contending with us for these and these things, and shall we not give him a sober hearing? nay, we do hear, and feel too, that our ears do *tingle*, and our very hearts ake, and shall we not regard? O that ever this should be said of *England*! What? what will become of us? *The Harp and the Viol, the Tabret and Pipe, and wine are in their Feasts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my People are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge*, Isa. 5. 12, 13. Let this be the first thing then remembred by the way, that whenever God doth lay his rod on you, he expects you should take special notice of it, and fet your selves with all seriousness, speed, and impartiality, to inquire into the true, and spiritual Meaning, and End of it.

2. Examine Conscience by the Word of God. How doth the Physician understand the distemper of his Patient, but by comparing and judging the Urine by the Rules of his Art? Cast the Rod then into a clean *Urinal* of Conscience, and examine what the Word of God will say of it there. Conscience is Gods *Deputy* and *Re-*

gister,

gister, and if thou haſt not for the preſent ſcratcht out God writing there; for the preſent, I ſay, for theſe *characters* will never be expung'd thoſe *leaves*, but by the ſame Divine hand that ingraved them. If thou haſt not ſubſtituted the *Lyes* and *Impoſtures* of thy own deceived heart, but wilt be faithful and ingenuous; here thou ſhalt find a true, and plain interpretation of Providence. We may not expect that God ſhould ſpeak to us immediately from Heaven, *vivâ voce*, or by any miraculous Revelations or Enthuſiaſms, as ſome giddy *Brains* would pretend unto; this were indeed *Phanaticiſm, nomine & re*. But, *The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.* The Word ſpeaks, and the Rod ſpeaks, and Conſcience will compare theſe together, and from thence draw up a full and perfect *Declaration*, and both prove, examine, and anſwer every *Article* of it, if it may but be ſuffer'd to execute its office in you. The great reaſon why we are ſuch ſtrangers to God, is becauſe we are ſuch ſtrangers to our ſelves: *Nemo in ſe ſe tentat deſcendere, nemo.* Affliction hath a great Influence, as on the other powers of the Soul, ſo eſpecially on the Conſcience, either to ſoften or to ſear it: Every ſtroke on *Pharaoh* left him harder and harder. *Why will ye be ſtricken any more? ye will revolt more and more.* But where the rod is intended for good, and works toward that End, there it ſoftens and quickens the Conſcience. What a bleſſed effect had that *Rout* at *Ai*, on *Joshua* and

Perſ.

and his people, *Josh.* 7. They presently fly to God, to know the Cause, and as soon as ever the thing was hinted to them, how industrious and restless were they, till they had found out the very *Man*, and executed Gods Law upon him, and so remov'd the Guilt and the Wrath from *Israel*? oh, that God would once set our *Troubled* Camp on the like course, in a like general, sincere, and effectual manner! *Manasseh*'s Fetters was that softned *Manasseh*'s Conscience, 2 *Chro.* 33. 11, 12. 'Twas *Nebuchadnezzar*'s affliction, that humbled his proud heart, *Dan.* 4. 33, 34. 'Twas the stronk from Heaven that opened *Saul*'s eyes, *Act.* 9. O Christians! take heed of hardning your hearts under the Rod; an affliction is never removed, but it leaves either a *curse* or a *blessing* behind it. Therefore, whenever God shakes his rod over you, or layes it on, upon you; as you respect the spiritual and eternal peace and welfare of your poor souls, awake your Consciences, and find out the Cause, and the Meaning of it. 'Tis not enough to groan, and mourn under the burden; this is but Nature's common course; which (if this be all) is in Gods account, but as the ungrateful *howling* of a Dog, *Hos.* 7. 14. Nay, it is not enough neither, to bewail any external, though spiritual, loss; for, if this be all that your care and thoughts are taken up about; those that *sate at the door of the gate of the Lords house, weeping for Tammuz*, Ezek. 8. 14. were almost as Religious as you. Take this for a second Di-

reflion; Set Conſcience on work, and that in a lively, impartial, and regular way; acquaint your ſelves with God, and know upon what termes he is with you. O my brethren! there is a great deal of ſelf-trying, and ſelf-denying work before you. But how Conſcience is to be put to it in this duty, I ſhall ſhew you more at large hereafter.

3. Though the Rod may be general, yet the Voice is particular. Beſides thoſe more private and perſonal evils, that every Town, Congregation, Trade, Family, or Perſon, are complaining under; there are National and Publick miſeries, which are the common Calamities wherein a very individual Member is particularly concern'd; and ſo the *voice* directs its diſtinct and particular *Items* to every one particularly; and to every one it ſutes it ſelf ſeaſonably and proportionably; It is a voice of Humiliation to my Pride, of Mortification to thy Covetouſneſs; of Self-denial to the Luſt and Revenge of another; of Quickning to the Negligence and Cowardice of another; of Eſtabliſhment to the Hæſitation, and Unreſolvedneſs of another; of Peaceableneſs and Charity to the Tumultuouſneſs and Cenſorioulneſs of another, *&c.* And to one it ſpeaks with more terrour and dread; to another, in a calmer, and ſweeter *Dialect*, according to the nature and height of that guilt or corruption it aims at. Therefore reaſon thus with your ſelves; God hath now taken up his Rod, and is come to plead with *me*; though the laſh fall more ſe-

verely

verely on others; yet *I* am in the same *Condemnation*, and am as much concerned as ever those were, that are now lying in heaps at his feet; oh, how shall I, how dare I, think of running from, or justifying my self before God! nay, a provoked, and an avenging God. Alas, Christians! mistake not; 'Tis not so much for the Oaths and Blasphemies, the Drunkenness and Sodomie, the Sabbath-breaking and Idolatry, of Gods enemies, those sons of *Belial*, that are among us, that God hath taken up this Controversie with us; *he hath*, I will not say, *a few*, but many *things against us*. 'Tis for my sin, and for your sins, that God hath torn up our hedge, and thrown down our wall, and laid us waste. "As Mr. *Bradford*, that blessed Martyr, acknowledged in his Prayer; *Lord*, it "*was my unthankfulness that brought in* "Queen Maries *daye*; *it was my unfruitful-* "*ness that caused the untimely death of King* "Edward *the* 6th. And those Christians that "were banished, and fled in *Queen Maries* "*dayes*, professed, where-ever they came, that "God, for their unthankfulness, had taken the "Gospel from them.

If then you would learn the language of the Rod, and understand the meaning of it, take this for another Rule with you: Believe it, that God is now speaking from Heaven to you; to *us*, and to *thee*, in particular: oh, what an awe, and dread should this cast upon us! Suppose you should hear God calling out of Heaven to you by name; what a dismal astonishment

would it strike you into? why Man, what d
thou think? Is the Lords Rod a dumb rod?
else, hath it nothing to say to *Thee*, becau
possibly, as yet, it hath not much to do wi
thee? or, is this a feigned Message, an Erra
of my own, that I am now come from God int
thee in? Do'st thou believe I am forcing th
with a lye? or else, is it true what I say? W
then, if the aim and *level* of the Rod, be at the
and at me, in particular; is it not time for us t
hear & lay it to heart? Shall the arrows of Go
avenging Fury strike us through the very hear
before we will be perswaded to look for the s
of the guilt there? O, my brethren! we stan
Gods *Butt* this day: and be sure, that either
your *Lusts*, or your *Lives*, he will shortly hi
you out; 'tis not the *White*, (which men sho
at) but the Black that God levels at; O sepa
rate, separate your selves! that you be not fou
anon among the slain of Gods Battel. 'Tis
not Covenant-Interest shall excuse you her
nor the Priviledge of Adoption that shall
defend you; if a *Child* stand, nay, though
his *Natural*, and *Onely Son*, between him and
his *Mark*, he shall surely die.

4. If we would understand the true intent
and meaning of the Lords Rod; we must hum-
bly betake our selves to the Lord of the Rod.
It is not safe to trust our selves in this case;
Self bears so strong a hand in us, that it will be
hard, if not impossible, to escape its *Distinctions*
and *Fallacies*. There will be some secret *Grains*
of Allowance for this *Lust*, and a plausible *Dis-*
pensation

pensation for the other *Sin*; and a colourable *veil* spread over the other *Abomination*; a thousand wayes we are in danger of deceiving our selves, untill we go to God, as the Disciples did to Christ, *to unriddle to us his own Parables.* This was *Joshua*'s course, as you may read in the place before-quoted; and this was *David*'s course, *Psal.* 42. 9. *I will say unto God my Rock, why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the Enemy?* O Sirs! let this be your speedy course too. Set some time apart, solemnly to enquire of God, what his will is, and what he would have you to do, as to the *hard case* he hath set before you; Go into your *corners*, and commune with God in secret; lay down your *packs* at his feet, and spread them all before him; open every *Box*, and every *Bundle*, turn out the very *Bottom* of all in his sight, and tell him; Lord, I am sensible of thy Rod, oh, make me as sensible of thy meaning in the Rod! oh, let me know why my Father is displeased! thy Frowns are death to me; Lord! I cannot bear them; O, let me but once know my sin, and it shall be enough! *What is my Trespass, what is my sin, that thou art thus pursuing after me?* search all my *Stuff*, examin every *Tent*, and set it here before me; bring out the *stolen Images*, though the *Rachel* of my greatest delight should dissemble them, and plead a *Custom*, or *Natural Infirmity* for them. 'Tis true, Lord, there is cause enough why thou shouldst not only frown, but dash so filthy a *Potsheard* in pieces

for ever; But, O let me hear, Lord, what no thou hast against me! let me not be judg'd and condemn'd in a Language I cannot understand. Is it my Pride that displeaseth thee? O, break my heart, whatever it cost me, and make me as humble as thou wouldst have me to be! Is it my Worldliness, my Uncleanness, my Impatience, my Remissness in Duties, my want of zeal, or lots of Love; Lord, I would not spare one of these *Amalekites*; O let thy Spirit convince me of sin! and then gird me with thy Sword and thy Power, that, though I cannot *slay* them through at one *thrust*, yet I may be ever *hewing* them in pieces, till thou hast utterly destroyed them from me. Oh, my brethren! will you engage your selves in this Duty? Would you be hid in the day of God's wrath? or shall he go on to pour it out upon you? Now resolve; or shortly it will be too late. The *Axe* is lifted up; shall God strike, or will you relolve? He is about his *strange work* among us, and that his Enemies shall shortly know. Will you be numbered among them that perish? the Lord forbid! Oh, let us prepare to meet the Lord, while he is yet a little way off, in the way of his Judgments, before his fierce wrath to light on our *Souls*, that it be too late to escape to the *Mountain*. Thus I have given you the *Key* to unlock these hidden Mysteries, and to open the *Oracle* to you. Turn it as I have directed you, and as God shall enable you: Observe the four *Words* of it; if you break of with either of these, it will not do. I shall premise

no further, but proceed to the *Voice*. And first, in General.

1. One voice of the Rod in general, is this; *God will have his People to awake, and consider. The Anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart; in the latter dayes ye shall consider it perfectly*, Jer. 23. 20. When a People have lost their *Hearing*, God will deal with them by that other *sense* of *Feeling*. In the latter dayes ye shall consider it perfectly; though they have made a shift to stop their *Ears* at Warning, Calls, and Threatnings; though my *Trumpets*, and *Heraulds* of War, could not awaken them; yet my *Sword* shall at last do it. *I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes: now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver*, Psal. 50. 21, 22. If my *words* will not do it, my *Blows* shall; I will get *Life* in them, or I will take that *Life* they have from them; if the *rending* off their *skirt* will not rouze them, I will tear them in pieces, and none shall deliver them. *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed*, Isa. 26. 11. Thus doth God many times make his very Enemies consider, and force them to see, and gaze upon their damning guilt, and inevitable misery: they shall know that God is too hard for them. *Vicisti Galilæe*, was the cursed speech of that accursed *Apostate, Julian*: God will sometimes give them the *Præliba mina*, the fore-taste of

Hell, and make them to consider, whether they will or no. This, my brethren, is a dreadful kind of *considering*, when God shall cast men into Hell with their eyes open; like some departing Souls, scar'd by the hideous out-cryes of those that are about them, when their eyes are sunk, and the gates of Death seem to be shut upon them; then to stare abroad again, in a gastly, trembling distracted, posture; *ut sentiant se mori*, that they may feel themselves to die: this is the Judgment and Vengeance of Considering. But when God comes to deal with his children, he treats them like a Father; though he knock them, yet he will not kill them; though he may break their heads, yet he will not dash out their brains; and yet awake they must too, as dead as they are, he will not leave them so; he hath a Rod for them, which will break no bones; and with this he whips them into their spiritual senses, when words will not prevail. *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*, Eph. 5. 14. And now, Christian Reader, thus farr thou hast read, but canst thou say, *Hitherto I am come*. Have these, or any other of Gods Calls or Knocks so much as awakened thee? and art thou sure thou dost not dream? art thou fit for a sober, and rational debate of that Controversie that lies between God and thy Soul? If so, then,

1. Consider, whether thou standest in relation with God, as a *Friend*, or as an *Enemy*: this will be the very first thing that will call for

for serious thoughts. *Lord, Who art thou? and whose am I?* Are these the effects of Love or Hatred? the rods of a Father, or of a Foe? As ever thou expectest comfort in, or good from the Rod, get this Question answered. As there is a vast difference between the *iron* Rod of Gods hostile wrath, and the *gentle* Rod of his Fatherly Correction, in respect of the Measure, and the Divine Attribute from whence it proceeds: so in respect of the End and Design of it too. The rod of his wrath is not *intended* to amend, but to destroy. A rod of Scorpions will not heal, but poyson the soul; if we cannot look upon him as a Father, and on his rod, as the Fruit and Evidence of his Fatherly love and care, it is never like to reform us. If a Child be beaten by a stranger, it begets hatred, revenge, or slavish fear; 'tis that correction only, that we can, on good grounds, apprehend to come from zeal, though abused love; that is like to produce love and obedience in us. *Thou hast chastised me*, sayes *Ephraim*, *and I was chastised*, and because it was thou, *I was ashamed; I repented; I was instructed; I smote upon my thigh.* Now, what was the relation between God and *Ephraim*? *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant Child?* With what undiscoverable, and yet unconcealable affections, doth God fall on the necks of his poor children, that dutifully submit to the Rod, like *Joseph* on his Brethren, when the Relation could be no longer dissembled towards them?

God's

Gods Kisses are never sweeter, than when he kisses off the tears that his own rod hath occasion'd.

But here I would speak a word or two, very briefly, to a *Case*, which possibly may be thy Case. *Ob.* The Rod lies very heavy upon me, may some poor soul complain; and I can apprehend nothing of love in it: I sit in such *darkness*, that I can see no *light*; neither from within, nor from above; I scarce dare so call God *Father*, nor can I see any evidencing, or comfortable Fruit of his Rod upon me. And what shall I do in this *Case*?

Answ. This hath ever been a common case with the People of God. *Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?* saies *Job*. *wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro, and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?* Job 13. 24. *He findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy*, Job 33. 10. So *David* was ready to look on himself as a *Cast-away*, Psal. 51. 11. *Cast me not away from thy presence.* So what a *Case* was the *Spouse* in Cant. 5. 6, 7. when her *Beloved* had withdrawn himself? she sought him, and *called* him, but could get no answer; the *watchmen smote* her, and *wounded* her; her estate was very low, and yet she was the *Spouse* still. I would not that Affliction should fill you with hard thoughts of God, or distressing thoughts of your selves. To conclude that the Sun is set, as soon as it is clouded, would be weak and childish; But more distinctly to state the Question.

1. Can

1. Can you truly say, that you love God as well *correcting* as *comforting*? if so; Let it be an Argument with you, that your love was not placed on the enjoyment you have lost, but on the God you still enjoy.

2. Would you not be content, and gladly chuse rather to part with all that's dear to you in the World, than part with your *Adopted Relation* unto God? Had you not rather have God for your Father, than the World with all its Dowry, for your Portion? Let your highest *Choice* of God then be an Argument of Gods dearest *Choice* of you.

3. Would you not rather have the Affliction sanctified, than removed? Possibly in some hot assault, or the *Paroxysm* of some prevailing temptation, thou mayst not be so well able to judg; but, when thou hast space to make and declare thy deliberate Choice, wouldst thou change thy afflicted Case for all the Pomp and Pleasure of those that have the World, and nothing more, for their Portion? Would you chuse rather to be thus waished from sin, than with more ease or liberty to be still polluted with sin? If then the perfection of Holiness be your *Aim*, it shall one day be your *Crown*.

4. Dost thou find that sin begins to grow bitterer than ever, and resolutions stronger? Though the sense of thy suffering may be uppermost, and drown the sense of sin; yet canst thou not find, that sin lying at the bottom, is what which urgeth all? Wonder not at the

Strug-

Struggling then, *Twins are in thy womb*; continue these *throws* unto their appointed Issue, and know that *this sickness is not unto death*; but a Symptom of better health.

5. Let thy former experiences and evidences be produc't against present doubts and jealousies; on this Foundation, *Joh.* 13. 1. *Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end.* If ever he were thy Father, he will ever be thy Father. *For the Gifts and calling of God are without Repentance*, Rom. 11. 29.

2. Consider what thy wayes and carriage towards God have been. *Let us search and try our wayes, and turn again to the Lord*, Lam. 3. 40. This is absolutely requisite, both to our knowledg of the Offence, and expiation of the Guilt, and the removal of the Effect of it with a Blessing. How is it possible we should know what God is displeased at in us, unless we reflect on what we have done? and consider wherein we have miscarried our selves toward him? Why hath God lighted up his Candle in our Conscience, and unseal'd the Word of his mind, and sent duty to us; but that by these we may come to know wherein he is pleased or displeased? And when we perceive his anger by the effects of it; don't common reason tell us, that this is the course? to compare our wayes with our Rule, and to consider what we have done? Is there any probable hope of removing the Effect, without knowledge of the Cause? Alas, Christians! how can you believe,

how

how can you hope, how can you pray for deliverance, as long as the Cause of our Bondage is not acknowledged, nor removed? Ah, ! how apt are our false hearts to shuffle, and daub here, to pack off the guilt on others! Loth we are to discover our shame, as long as we can get any Fig-leaves to cover it; but yet all will not serve, *the covering will be too narrow*; thy nakedness will not be hid; there's no licking thy self whole; all thy Plea's and distinctions will not do; the *Fallacy* will be detected, when once God comes to *moderate*; 'tis not the *Woman*, nor yet the *Serpent*, shall excuse thee; 'tis not the *Peoples* common *vote* or *violence*; nor thy supererogated *Devotion*, that shall palliate thy partial obedience. God will not charge on his children, the debts, or the crimes of his enemies: nor is he like those passionate *Furies*, who, in their rage, know no distinction between Friends and Enemies. *What mean ye, that ye use this Proverb, saying, The Fathers have eaten soure grapes, and the childrens teeth are set on edge?* Ezek. 18. 2. *The soul that sinneth, it shall dye*, ver. 4. Be sure, God is not striking thee for nought; he sees cause enough, or this cup had never come to thy share. *Lo, I have sinned*, saies *David*, *and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my Fathers house*, 2 Sam. 24. 17. Now in this serious reflection on our wayes, we should consider,

1 Sam. 15. 21.

Culpæ ipsæ non transferuntur, nec Criminum quædam confusio fit. Lips. de Const. l. 2. c. 17.

Yet see ver. 1.

See also Ezek. 14. 23.

1. Our

Our sins, with their aggravations. Pardon of Sin is the Gate of Mercy; while Sin lyeth at the door, Mercy cannot enter: Penitent Confession is the only *Lege-way* to Pardon; and certainly a distinct knowledg must necessarily precede such Confession, and a diligent Search such Knowledge. In this *Climax* there's no striding two stairs at once; if you fail in one, you are out in all. The removal of an Affliction before the Sin be removed, is the way to a greater, and more spiritual Judgment, and to turn *Rods* into *Scorpions*. O my brethren! for your Souls sake, and for your dear Posterity's sake, *search, and try your ways*; pass an impartial review on all the Passages and Transactions of your hearts and lives. That God is displeased, we doubt not; and that sin is the cause, we doubt not; but what these sins are, and when, where, and how this guilt is and hath been contracted, is that which now the Rod calls on us to examine. Sinner, wilt thou be perswaded to set thine heart to the work? Seemeth it a small thing, that God hath imprison'd his own Glory? and hath mingled our tears, nay, our bloud, with our sacrifices? divided, and torn us, *Soul* and *Body*, *Church* and *State*? And, after all, shall God take up his old Lamentation over us? *Jer.* 8. 4, 5, 6, 7. *Thus saith the Lord, Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? why then, is this People slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return; I hearkned, and heard, but they spake*

shake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the Battel. Oh! how should our thoughts pry into every corner, and leave no *stone* unturn'd, lest the *Leprosie* should be in it, and the last end be worse than the beginning.

1. *The sin of our nature* will afford us matter of large consideration, and sad lamentation. That *Peccatum agens*; that Pregnant Sin; that Root of Bitterness; the Original of all our Sin and Misery. Now sit down, and seriously consider; Lord! in what a case was I born! and how long did I lie ignorant of, and contented under that estate! how little have I been troubled about it! how faint and heartless, at best, have my endeavours been, to wrestle with it, or to escape from it! oh, how full am I still of the old *Dregs*! like a *Cake not turn'd*, but little more than half bak't; perpetually prone to backsliding! If thou wilt know from whence it is that the *Streams* run so foul, away to the *Fountain*, and there thou shalt quickly see how it comes to pass, and that it is more than an *acquired* Pollution; the Fountain, the Fountain is unclean! This was *David's* course, *Psal.* 51. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* Sin set out with me, the very first step from my *Conception*: the Leprosie clave unto me in the very *Pit* from whence I was *digged*. He that never felt the bitterness and weight of *Original* sin, further than it discover'd it self in *Actual*;

is

[illegible] Stranger to true Repentance, And for [illegible] aggravation of this Plague of our Natures, consider the sinful effects of it.

2. *In respect of omission.* How hath it deadned thee to all kinds of duty; especially to the most spiritual, and self-denying duties! When we should, and sometimes, *when we would do good, evil is present*, and too often prevalent, *with us*. Brethren! in the Bowels of Christ Jesus, I beseech you, consider how large an Indictment of this nature, Conscience has on record against us; We can't plead Ignorance, as some others, it may be, hope to do: We have, or might have known our *Master's Will*; He hath not left us one *Talent* only, but all the *Treasures* of his House; the unsearchable riches of his Gospel: He hath not left us as some small *Legatees*, but *Heirs* and *Executors* of his whole *Will* and Testament; and now, what have we to shew for all this? Here we have been wrangling about *Circumstances* and *Administrations*, despising or envying one anothers portion, & so have turned the grace of God into *lasciviousness*. Oh, where's the Improvement! where's the Encrease! the Advantage that God will shortly call for! Remember what was *Laodicea*'s temper, and what was *Laodicea*'s curse Oh, this wretched, this cursed *lukewarmness*! how dear is it like to cost us! By that time we have discounted what we have let pass, through invincible, nay, shall I add, through affected and gross Ignorance; how many gracious demands have we wickedly repell'd, because of some distastful, or flesh-displea-

pleasing difficulty that seem'd to attend it? how might God dispatch his Angels with *Warrants of Contempt* against us! Oh, what can Conscience say! han't we easily granted the Devil what we have stiffly denied Christ? and begrutcht God, what we have willingly, and prodigally bestowed on our Lusts? ah, how should these things pierce our Souls to consider! Again, by that time we have abstracted all that we have lost of that which we have done, through sinful miscarriages, in the manner, or in the end; how very little will it be, that we have been found faithful and diligent in?

3. *In respect of Commission*; What black *Legions* will there meet us here? If we look no further than our *Hearts*, what an Abyss of Filth and Deceit shall we find there? Our guilty *Eyes* have been, as it were, in covenant with *Lust*. What endless Catalogues are our *Tongues* convicted of? Can we wash our *Hands* in Innocency? how justly may we hold them up at Gods Barr? The miserable abuse of our *Time*; The evil *Examples* we have laid, as snares for others; I am numbring now by Thousands and Millions: Oh, our Pride! our Worldliness! our Self-endedness! our Censoriousness! our Impatience! these are some of the Generals, under whose arbitrary Command we have yielded up our selves into subjection. Lord! what sad work have we made? whither should we wander, were it not for thy *Shepherds Crook*? what tears of bloud are sufficient to testifie a Repentance answerable to such Guilt? oh, that

God would prevail with me, and you, and every one of his People, to take these things into deeper consideration, than ever! yet we have done! Now that God is not only *warning* us with his Word, but *warming* us with his Rod; how near should it go to our very hearts to think what a *strange* and unpleasing *work* we have put God upon! Oh, methinks we might hear the sounding of his Bowels within him; how loath is he to part with us, or to depart from us! *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together*, Hos. 11. 8. What dear ingagements of love hath God laid upon us? *when Israel was a child, then I loved him; I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by the arms: But they knew not, that I healed them.* The people that will not consider, are nigh unto Cursing: oh, that God would now awaken us, that we might know the things that belong to our Peace! When Parents correct their children, they do, or should reckon with them, and remember them of those old *scores*, which have been past by with an angry look, or a bare threatning. This is that, my Brethren, which God is now insisting on with us; not but that the present Provocations are high enough, to have exhausted a far greater proportion of wrath; but he will have us to know, that this is not all he hath to reckon with us for; there are old miscarriages behind, which were never

never yet accounted for; a thousand *debts* and *treſpaſſes*, which, it may be, were never once entred on your *Books*; How many years war, how many years peace? how many years ſcarcity, how many years plenty? and how many thouſands of *Items* are there ſet under every one of theſe heads? O! methinks, the very thought of theſe things, is enough to amaze us, and ſtrike us dead! Eccl. 12. 14.

2. *We ſhould conſider our Duties.* This was good *Hezekiah's* practice, 2 *King.* 20. 3. *I beſeech thee, O Lord, Remember now how I have walked before thee, in truth, and with a perfect heart; and have done that which is good in thy ſight.* Chriſtian! theſe are things that require thy exacteſt examination; and the rather, becauſe on theſe thou art apt to lean. When all thy outward comforts lie at the mercy of thine enemies, hither thou thinkeſt to flie, and beginneſt to look big on thy Duties; not as to their *Merit*, but as to their *Evidence*. Don't all thy hopes ſeem to hang on this pin? Beſides, by theſe God hath been more immediately honoured, or diſhonoured: Nothing reflects ſo much on his honour, either to the praiſe or diſpraiſe; as that which participates, or pretends the neareſt Relation to him. Now make the caſe; Suppoſe thou ſhouldſt be miſtaken in thy duties, as, 'tis poſſible, thou mayſt; what if there ſhould be a Flaw found in them at laſt, which will ſpoil all; in what a caſe art thou then? Canſt thou believe that there are none ſo miſtaken? O Chriſtian! let me tell thee, Hell

is called the place of Hypocrites, even such as were for the most part thus mistaken. Nay, the best of Saints, may, in a great measure, be mistaken too; they may overween their duties, and miss of much of that peace and support they expected in a day of tryal; therefore bring thy duties to the Test, and try them these three wayes.

1. *By the Principle from which they have proceeded.* Canst thou truly say with the Apostle, 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. *This is our rejoycing, the testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the world.* 'Tis possible, there may be a carnal rejoycing, in a false supposition; but, art thou sure thy rejoycing is not in vain? Hath Duty proceeded from a Principle of Love and Obedience, and filial awful Respect unto God? Hath his Sovereign Command, and the conscience of Duty, been the *Terminus à quo?* Can you look back on your duties, and appeal to God, that all this hath been done in an humble obedience to his command? Had Self-love, or Blind Custom, or Slavish Fear, no hand, nor interest in them? These are questions that God and Conscience can best answer.

2. *By the Rule, by which they have been directed.* Hath the Word of God been thy Rule in all thy duties, not only of Solemn Worship, but of thy Calling and Relation? in all the transactions of thy Common, and Civil Affairs?

fairs? And hath this Rule had a *Casting-Voice* against all the *Votes* of carnal Reason and Interest? Hast thou us'd the Word of God, as thy Rule? *As many as walk according to this Rule, peace be on them*, Gal. 6. 16. Hath it been your Walking-staff, a Rule at hand where-ever you go? A *Carpenter*, (you know) is distinguished much, by the *Rule* he carries in his hand; which is not only for his support, but for the measuring and trying of any work he may meet with in his walk? And shall a *dry stick* be of more use and service in the hand of a Carpenter, than this *Olive-tree*, whose labour never fails, in the hand of a *Christian*! *But, as for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well nigh slipt*, sayes the Psalmist, *until I went into the Sanctuary of God: then understood I their end*, Psal. 73. 2. 17. This is a tryed staff in such cases; thou mayst depend upon it, and trust thy life and soul with it; if it break under thee, or start aside with thee, or any way deceive thee, without thy horrible abuse of it, then never believe God more. *As for God, his way is perfect: the Word of the Lord is tryed: he is a Buckler to all those that trust in him*, Psal. 18. 30. And again; Is not thy whole life one continued course of work? *Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do*, ye must do by rule; eat and drink by rule, and sleep by rule, talk by rule, and work by rule. *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto, according to thy word*, Psal. 119. 9. Those that will work for God,

must work by Gods Rule: *Gheß-work* will never vie under a crooked, and blind eye, and in a crooked, and unhappy hand. Now consider, how have you employ'd your Rule? the Tradesman will understand every Figure and Point in his Rule, and the use of it; have you thus improv'd your Judgments about it? doth the *word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom?* Col. 3. 16. Hath it been a Commanding, a Transforming Rule? have you, *with open face*, beheld your selves in this *Glass*, that you are *changed into the same Image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord?* 2 Cor. 3. 18. Hath it been a Rule to talk, and to reprove others; to censure your brethren, and to condemn your enemies, rather than to reform your selves by? Hath it been your only rule? han't your own habituated Lusts, and Wills, and Customes, been as much your rule as this? Han't the *Genius* of the Times, the Examples of Great ones, or thy *Byas* of thy Interest, been as much thy Rule, as any thing else? oh, that God would set your Consciences on work, to search these things out!

3. *By the end unto which they have been designed.* The glory of God (I know) and your own Salvation, is the End and Design that you own: Ay, but may I ask you secretly, Hath this been your very end in earnest? the *terminus ad quem*, of all your Duties and Endeavours? Can you appeal to God, who knoweth all things, that this is true? and dare you venture your souls upon it? Oh, that I could say so too!

Hath

Hath not ſelf, or ſomething elſe, which thou art not willing to own, ſometime ſtood *Captain* in thy *Prizes*? what elſe mean theſe ſelf-attributions? theſe ſelf-confidences? this ſelf-ſeeking, and ſelf-pleaſing? hath Gods glory hung like a Curtain by thee, to cover that which thou art aſham'd ſhould appear! Oh, Chriſtian! what wouldſt thou ſay, if all thy duties ſhould be loſt, and all thy hopes loſt, and that which now ſupports thee, ſhould at laſt undo thee? The time is at hand, that God will try what our ends have been; oh, that I could prevail with my ſelf, and you, to be before hand with God in this great Search!

3. *We ſhould conſider our Graces*; and that,

1. *For the truth of them.* Thy Aſſurance of the truth and reality of thy grace, will be thy beſt ſupport under ſinking Providences. The time may come, that thou mayſt have nothing in the world thou canſt call thine own, but what thou haſt *within*, and *above*; When St. *Peters* advice may be more in ſeaſon with thee, 2 *Pet.* 1. 10. *Give all diligence, to make your Calling and Election ſure.* Conſider, how dreadful a caſe would it be, ſhould you be numbred at laſt among thoſe, that now you would look upon as Gods and Your enemies; if all your diſtinctions and diſtances ſhould vaniſh at the Grave, and when your veils are gone, your inſide ſhould be like ſome of theirs? If they upbraid you with hypocriſie now, how juſtly may they do it then? with what aſtoniſh-

ing ſhame wilt thou be coupl'd up with thoſe that now perſecute thee? when that which now thou accounteſt intolerable ſlander, ſhall appear to be true, and God ſhall witneſs to all the world, that thine enemies were not miſtaken in thee? oh, how can we be ſerious enough, in a buſineſs of ſo immediate Concernment! let thy caſe be what it will, 'twill be worth thy pains to know it.

2. *For the growth of them.* What increaſe have we made of our Maſter's talents? By the growth, we may gueſs at the the truth of grace. *The path of the juſt, is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day*, Pro. 4. 18. Conſider, what means and helps you have had: where's that you have to ſhew for all your Sabbaths, Ordinances, and Duties? a little growth, it may be, in the head, like children in the *Rickets*; but, where's that Humility, that Self-denial, that Heavenly-mindedneſs, that Patience, Charity, and univerſal Obedience; that Inward, and Spiritual growth, that growth at the Heart, and at the Root, wherein the Life, and Power of Chriſtianity doth conſiſt? Hath your growth been proportionable? Proportionable to the means you have enjoyed? how have your Crops paid the charge of all that Husbandry and Patience, that hath been laid out about you? Proportionable, each part to other? han't your Zeal out-run your Knowledge? or your Knowledge overgrown your Love? Gods *growing Temple*, is a *Building fitly framed together*, Eph. 2. 21. Not like *Nebuchadnez-*

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zars *Image*, with his *golden head*, but all the other parts of baſer Metal. *Dan.* 2. 32.

3. We are to conſider, what Gods wayes and carriage towards us have been, and to compare our wayes and his together; which might be one ſpecial mean to humble, and ſhame us; *Hear now, O houſe of Iſrael, Are not my wayes equal? are not your wayes unequal?* Ezek. 18. 25. O, let us ſit down now, and conſider, where the inequality, the unrighteouſneſs lies. *What Iniquity have your Fathers found in me, that they are gone farr from me?* Jer. 2. 5. Have you examin'd your wayes, according to my laſt direction? and have you dealt thorowly, and impartially with your ſelves in it? if ſo, let me ask you, What think ye? Where's the fault now? If the inequality be on your part, as I am ſure you have found it, if you have found it at all; O then, reſt not here, go on, until you have brought it to ſome happy iſſue. Conſider, how long hath God waited? how many wayes hath he tryed? how hath he proffer'd, at this time, and at that time, and yet hath forborn? how often hath he drawn his ſword upon us? and yet hath put it up again, and could not, for his *Pity*, ſtrike; even as we have proffer'd to return, and yet we have plaid *faſt and looſe* with him, like a broken, and deceitful Bow. And now, what a *Compaſs* is he fetching, to humble us! Here we are complaining, how ill it is with us; oh, where is our peace, our liberty, our plenty, and the glory of God, in his Worſhip and Ordinances, become! Who would have thought

thought that ever it would have come to this? But, alas! we are blind, we can't see the cloud rising, till it begin to fall about our ears; Why! these things, nay, and it may be, more than these, have been foreseen by some, whose eyes were in their heads, and foretold too; and yet now we are come with our *Non putarâmus, Who would have thought it?* Why! who would not have thought it? who could ever have hop't that God would prosper a *Building* on such a *Bottom*, and in such *Hands?* who would wonder to see a *House* tumble, when *Blood*, and *Treachery*, and *Oppression*, and *Self-seeking*, and *Deceit*, and *Covenant-breaking*, lay the Foundation of it? and all this, though seen by some, yet lamented, as it ought, by few; at least, by those that knew not how to help it: We may wonder rather, that it is with us as it is. And now these two years, or more, hath God had us on the *Hip*, like poor *Isaac*, *bound, and stretcht upon the wood*; Who, What is it, hath prevented hitherto, that we have not been offer'd in *Sacrifice?* Can we think that our repentings, our humiliations, our personal, family, or heart reformations, have done it? oh, that it were so! oh, that it were indeed so! But that which I chiefly aim at, under this *Head*, is this: Walk with God, in the way of his Providence; keep thine eye alwaies upon him; follow him as farr as Faith can trace him; take all these things, as the wise, and righteous, and merciful issues of his all-disposing Counsel and Governance; look on thy self as a piece of Clay

Nay, thousands have been sacrificed to the Plague, and to the Sword.

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on Gods Wheel; and let every *turn* of this flying wheel, help forward Gods design of grace upon thee.

4. Lastly, we must consider what it is that God aims at in us, and expects from us; This leads me to the following part of the *Voice*, and will be more fully answer'd, in that which remains to be spoken on this *Subject*: Wherefore, I shall add the less to this *Branch*. Are we ever like to answer Gods Ends, as long as we cannot, or will not, consider what his Ends are? Sure, 'tis in vain to give Laws or Ordinances to dead men, or mad men; such as are incapable of any serious consideration. The Aim of the Rod, in general, is this: *viz.* A Gospel, and Spiritual conformity to the Image, and revealed Will of God. This is the grand design of his Word, and of all his Providences and Ordinances; to renew that Image and Power in us, by the second *Adam*, which we had lost in the first *Adam*. *He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, & some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ*, Eph. 4. 12, 13. *That we might grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ*, ver. 15. Sufferings are part of our conformity to Christ, *who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*, Isa. 53. 3. and the means and way of our conformity to him in the perfection of Grace; *who was made perfect through sufferings*, Heb. 2. 10. Perfect, as to his *Office*, though not as to his *Nature*. *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like*

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unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-Priest, ver. 17. He bare them, as the *Condition* of our peace; but we, as the *punishment* of our sin, and the *Medicine* of our Souls. Thus you have heard the first Voice of the Rod in general; It would cause you to awake, and thus to consider. But if you rest here, and go no farther, you do no more than the *Sluggard*, whose *Field* is cursed with *Thorns* and *Nettles*; you may rub up your eyes, and draw aside your *curtains*, and let in the light, and tell over the *Dreams* and *Shades* that have disquieted, or beguil'd you, through the passages of the nigh; and yet while you keep your *Beds* still, and *fold your hands*, for another Nap, you do but aggravate the provocation, and cause God to double his stroaks, both for number and weight. Hath God called us to be idle? *Rise, let us be going*; we are lookt for in the Vineyard; one hour's slumber now hath more shame, and guilt, and danger, than three at Midnight. Know therefore, in the next place,

2. *The Rod calls for universal Reformation.* *Amend your wayes, and your doings*, saves God, *Jer.* 7. 3. And *throughly amend your wayes, and your doings: throughly execute Judgment between a man and his neighbour*, ver. 5. Sirs! God will make through-work with us, before he leave us; either he will *throughly* reform us, or *throughly* ruine us. He hath now stript us from head to foot, and hath even *set us as in the day that we were born*; sure, he means not to wash

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our feet only, but will now ſpread his *Plaiſter* as large as the *Sore*. He hath brought us to the *Red Sea*, where he will *baptize us in the Cloud*, and diſtinguiſh who are of *Egypt*, and who are of *Iſrael*; nay, who are of *Iſrael*, and who are *Iſrael* indeed. Now this Univerſality reſpects,

The Subject.
The Object.

1. *The Subject.* Every part, and power of Soul and Body, muſt paſs under the *Fuller's* hands. *Yield your ſelves* (without any reſtrictions, or reſerves) *unto God, as thoſe that are alive from the dead; and your members, as inſtruments of Righteouſneſs, unto God*, Rom. 6. 13. All that was out of Frame, muſt be ſet at rights again. If one *wheel*, or the leaſt *Pin*, be miſ-plac'd; if the moſt indiſcernable *motions* be impeded, the whole *Frame*, though otherwayes, never ſo glorious or elaborate, is rendred utterly uſeleſs and unſerviceable. Should I inſiſt here, on a diſtinct *Comment* on the ſeveral diſorders, weakneſſes, and pollutions of every particular Faculty and Member, I might ſeem to treſpaſs on my *Text*, and abuſe my intended brevity. Onely, let me tell you, as I paſs; The reformed Creature muſt be a new Creature; and the new Creature muſt be new-born; and the Child new-born hath every part and limb alike new; not only a new Head, or a new Tongue, but a new Heart, a new Eye, a new Will, a new Conſcience, new Affections, new Feet, new hands, new within, and new

new without. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new Creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new,* 2 Cor. 5. 17. The Corruption is universal, and so must the Restitution be: the dead man is all dead; and so when life comes, it is universal; *tota in toto, & tota in qualibet parte. Lord, not my feet only,* sayes *Peter, but my hands, and my head,* Joh. 13. 9.

2. *The Object.* 'Tis not enough to lopp off a sprout or two of sin, but it must be cleansed up by the Roots. Cut these *Brambles,* and you shall have three for one, prune them above ground, and they grow the stronger at the roots. Ah, my Brethren! is this all you have done? What though your *Church-path*, or your *Market-path* be free from those *Brambles,* that your Neighbours stumble not at them; yet the *Field* is overgrown, and God hath nothing to sow, at least, to grow there. O, sit down, and consider, what sins have you been particularly and personally convinc'd of? Can you name me the Lusts that you have set up for your Mark, the ruine whereof, you are resol'vd, in the strength of God, to seek; and against which, you will die Fighting or Triumphing? Answer me here, and then let me ask again; What is the sin thou art thus out with? and whence sprung thy strife with it? Is it some scandalous foul abomination? Drunkenness, it may be, or Adultery, or Theft, or Tale-bearing, or any the like things, of evil report amongst the soberer sort of carnal men? 'tis true, these things

things are a grief to every godly heart, to behold in others; much more, if their own. Now tell me, Christian, are these the sins thou findest thy self most guilty of, and addicted to; or dost thou seem to bear them such a spleen, because they are the sins of others, and the shame not like to reflect on thy self? If this be it, *Publicans* and *Harlots* may be in a fairer way to *Reformation* than thou. Hast thou duely searche thy own heart? what hast thou found there, that thou canst thus resolve against? hast thou mark'd out the *King* of Israel, thy accustomed, and most endeared Lust; and mustered thy strength, and severest charge there? hast thou found *Thy* Enemy, *Thy* Iniquity? Canst thou go freely to thy heart, and to all the privy, and subdolous Receſſes of it, and pull out thence, that secret, spiritual, and almost indiscernable Pride, that hidden and painted Idol of Covetousness, that *Jesuited* Traitor of Unbelief, those circumcised *Shechemites*, that are there, like *Toads* out of their Holes, and hew them in pieces before God? Alas, Christian! 'tis not doing, nor suffering, will save us, nor yet comfort us long, unless we do, and suffer, according to the full, and true intent and meaning of the Revealed Will of God; To lop off a forward, *scourging* Lust here, and to go, and *graft* it again on another *stock* by, is the propagation of sin, not the reformation of the Sinner. Oh, Sirs! I would not for all the world, you should be mistaken; 'tis as much as your own Souls, and the Crown of my rejoycing

cing on your account, in the day of the Lord, comes to. I fear the miſtake is more common than you are aware. O keep them all clean, within, as well as without, that you may never be aſham'd when God ſhall turn out your *Inſides* to all the world.

3. *God expects that his People ſhould humble themſelves greatly under his mighty hand.* Jer. 7. 29. *Cut off thine hair, O Jeruſalem, and caſt it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the Lord hath rejected the generation of his wrath.* And *Jam.* 4. 10. *Humble your ſelves in the ſight of the Lord, and he ſhall lift you up.* So, 1 *Pet.* 5. 6. *Humble your ſelves therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* This is the proper, and direct Voice of the Rod: if afflictions be *doctrinal*, as you have heard? what more natural *Inferences* may we deduce from it? why hath God brought down the outer man, but that he might humble the inner man? *For the day of the Lord of Hoſts ſhall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he ſhall be brought low*, Iſa. 2. 12. God will cauſe the ſtout hearts of the world to ſtoop, and make them know it is in vain to magnifie themſelves againſt their Maker. Know therefore, that whenever God hath to do with thee in ſuch wayes as theſe, he hath a ſpecial eye on thy Pride, for he hath ſaid, *God reſiſteth the proud*, Jam. 4. 6. Neither is thy forced external humiliation, enough; to be *humbled*, and to be *humble*, are

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of a wide difference. A *Pharaoh*, an *Ahab*, may lye under a *Force*, and under all their Humiliation, be as proud as ever. 'Tis not enough to bear an Affliction, though (it may be) with ſome commendable meaſure of patience; 'tis not the hanging of thy head like a *Bull-ruſh*, nor thy reſolute contempt of the Croſs, that will commend thee before God: The iron may look like Gold while 'tis in the fire, and yet it is but Iron ſtill; as ſoon as the heat is over, it returns to its old form: oh, my brethren! if you will learn any thing, if you will get any thing by the Rod, learn to humble your ſelves under it.

4. *God expects that his People ſhould ſtir up themſelves, to lay hold of him.* Shall we let our Father go, before he hath bleſſed us? *Woe unto us when God departs from us*, Hoſ. 9. 12. Don't we know and profeſs, that all our hopes and happineſs are bound up with him? and can we ſee him *going*, and our hearts not melt within us? oh, my Soul! ſhall we loſe him thus! can we ſee him turning his back upon us, and taking his laſt *Farewel* of us, and our *Souls* not dye for very grief? O *England*! haſt thou not a few Names yet, that cannot, that will not, part with their God ſo? oh, that I could melt into a cloud of Tears, and be ſprinkled on the hearts and eyes of my careleſs Brethren! O Blind! Blind *England*! Methinks I ſee *Lo-ammi* and *Lo-ruhamah* written on the doors of thy *Sanctuaries*, and the abuſed *Sampſon* of divine Patience laying hold on

the *Pillars* of it; Lord God, what wilt thou do with us? *Shall we fall, and not arise? wilt thou turn away, and not return?* O Father! Wilt thou not then take thy children with thee? with whom wilt thou leave us and our little ones? who shall teach us? who shall feed us? who will protect us? who will care for us? what will become of us? oh! let us dye in thine *Arms* before thou go: If thou wilt not--! if thou wilt not stay with us, let us go where thou goest, and dye, that we may be with thee. Crowns nor Kingdoms shall not tempt us to tarry behind thee; thou hast our hearts, and *our life is hid in thee*; if thou leave us, we dye. Oh, Sirs! if there be any thing of the life, or love of God in you; if ever you did, or ever mean to pray more? now pray; if you have any power with God, any relation to him, any interest in him, by Christ? now plead it, and improve it; if you can do any thing, now try what you can do to help us? Marvel not at my Passion, Brethren; I can't look up towards Heaven, and think of a departing God, but that I could even breathe out my very Soul after him; I can't think on your poor children, and those yet unborn of you, and what is like to become of them twenty years hence; if the glory of Israel, and the power of godliness should now depart from us; but it cuts my heart with pity for them; and can you altogether hold your peace at this time? certainly, 'tis no such indifferent case as the world accounts it. Who will plead with

God

God in ſuch a time as this, if you will not? Can theſe *Dunghil-Birds* ſet a due rate on *Jewels? what is thy beloved more than another beloved?* they can ſee no ſuch beauty in him, nor advantage by him, that they ſhould deſire him; their Corn, and Wine, and Luſts, are better to them than all that is in God or Chriſt; and are theſe the perſons then that are like to appeaſe a provoked God, and to hold him with us? You can't loſe a Child, a Wife, a Husband, a dear Friend, or any outward comfort or enjoyment, without ſome tears or trouble; and can you part with God, the fountain of all theſe, nay, of all good, with leſs trouble and care of heart? *Gird your ſelves, and lament, ye Prieſts: howl ye Miniſters of the Altar: come lye all night in ſackcloth, ye Miniſters of my God,* Joel. 1. 13. *Ye that make mention of the Lord, hold not your peace day nor night, keep not ſilence, and give him no reſt, till he eſtabliſh, and till he make Jeruſalem a praiſe in the earth,* Iſa. 62. 6, 7. Cant. 5. 9.

5. *God expects we ſhould renew our Covenant with him.* See the holy and pious zeal of *Ezra* and his people in the like caſe; after that God had begun to turn the Captivity of his people under *Cyrus*, *Darius*, and *Artaxerxes*, and had wonderfully reſtored them with a ſtrange and unhop'd-for deliverance, ſee *chap.* 9. 1. *The Princes came unto Ezra, ſaying, The people of Iſrael, and the Prieſts, and the Levites, have not ſeparated themſelves from*

the people of the lands; --- *For they have taken of their Daughters for themſelves, and for their ſons*; --- which they were expreſly forbidden to do, *Deut.* 7. 3. On this report, ſee how his loyal zeal did burn for God; *When I heard this thing, I rent my garment, and my mantle, and pluckt off the hair of my head, and of my beard, and ſate down aſtonied*, ver. 3. And then having prayed in a moſt humble, and pathetical manner, when he had *confeſſed weeping, and caſting himſelf down before the houſe of God*; nay, *the people wept very ſore*, chap. 10. 1. *Now therefore*, ſay they, *let us make a Covenant with our God, to put away all the wives, and ſuch as are born of them, according to the counſel of my Lord, and thoſe that tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the Law*, ver. 3. Here is not only their Conſideration, Confeſſion, Repentance, Reformation; but their Solemn Covenant; for *they ſware*, ver. 5. for the perpetual remembrance, and confirmation of it. Oh, that there were ſuch a ſpirit in the hearts of our *Ezra's*! and in the hearts of our Iſrael! Let us once more make a Covenant with God; if any thing be like to ſtay him with a people, 'tis his Covenant. *For he is a God that keepeth Covenant and Mercy for them that love him and obſerve his Commandments*, Neh. 1. 5. He never did, nor ever will, break his Covenant of mercy, with thoſe that keep their Covenant of love and obedience with him; oh then! Let us *vow and pay unto the Lord our God*,

Pſal.

Pſal. 76. 11. See the bleſſed effects of *Aſa*'s Covenant, when they ſware *with all their heart, and with all their ſoul*, 2 Chro. 15. 12, 13, 14. Here I might tell you what the matter of our Covenant ſhould be; but that I'm ſure it is not for want of competent helps, if you are ignorant. That which I have to ſay at preſent, is, only to mind you of what I preſume you know; that is, If you have ſworn in faithfulneſs, nay, though only your Baptiſmal vow be upon you, you have ingag'd for your ſincere, willing, and impartial obedience to the whole revealed Will of God, both in matters of Faith and Practice, with all the *ſpecies*, and neceſſary conſequences eſſentially or integrally belonging to this obedience. Now conſider, in what ſpecial reſpects you have broken this Covenant, and draw it out on the Tables of your hearts; nay, were it in *writing*, to be ever kept for a Memorial and Remembrancer by you, it might wonderfully advantage your End; and then humbly and ſolemnly offer it unto the gracious acceptance of God, in the name of Chriſt. I might further add, with what ſeriouſneſs, faithfulneſs, conſideration, reſolution, humility, ſelf-denial, we ſhould renew our broken Covenant with him: But I intend not to enlarge. All that I have yet to ſay to this *Branch*, is but this; Be convinc'd of your groſs breach of Covenant, and your extreme, and abſolute need of making up this breach; Sit down, and ſtudy thoſe dreadful miſchiefs, that will certainly and ſpeedily enſue thoſe broken

and forfeited Bonds. When God ſtands diſengag'd, man lies in a deſperate caſe. A Covenant that is not made on due Convictions, is never like to hold long; if the *Bonds* be drawn and ſeal'd, and yet the debt not heartily acknowledged, 'tis never likely to be honeſtly paid by ſuch beggarly and paultry Debtors as we are.

6. *God expects ſomething extraordinary* from his people, under extraordinary Providences. We are weighed in the *Balance*, and are found *wanting*: Our Falſe Balance and Scant Meaſure, is convicted before God, and now he will no longer be thus ſerv'd by us; The *Whip* is upon us, and the *Spur* in our ſides, and ſhall we not mend our Pace? The Fire refines the Gold, and gives it an extraordinary luſtre, and are we altogether, as the houſe of *Iſrael*, become *Droſs*? *All they are Braſs, and Tin, and Iron, and Lead, in the midſt of the Furnace, they are even the droſs of ſilver*, Ezek. 22. 18. to 22. Will not the Furnace melt, not cleanſe us? Shall we come forth as black and as foul as ever? as proud, as covetous, as ſenſual, as carnal, as careleſs, as crooked and deformed as ever? Will any one think we are more than painted, counterfeit Fire, when the Storms and Bellows will work no change, nor ſtirr the Flames in us? oh, how ſhould our Faith ſhine, our Love, our Patience, our Humility, our Zeal, our Heavenly-mindedneſs, and every grace, like the gloriouſly beſpangled Stars in their proper Spheres and Orbs, in this

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Freezing, and Winters night! If ever you intend your light ſhall ſhine that others may ſee it, now let it appear to them that ſit in darkneſs. Well, my Brethren! God will not now be content with our old, formal, heartleſs devotions, our lame zeal, our crippl'd obedience, our luke-warm love, our pur-blind faith, our tender-skin'd patience, our carnal heavenly-mindedneſs. He hath broken our peace, to break our pace; and, if this won't do, he will double his blows, or (which is worſe) will leave us by the way, to periſh under our burden. God will have ſomething now more than ordinary.

By way of Reſignation;

By way of Reſolution.

1. By way of Reſignation; Double thy Sacrifice; I mean not thy Jewiſh or Ceremonial; but thy Evangelical Sacrifice. Let him that hath ſo long woed thee for thy heart, now have thy whole heart; if he ask thy *Coat*, let him freely take thy *Cloak* alſo, if it may any way ſerve him: let this be the language of thy Soul to God, as *Araunah*'s to *David*, 2 Sam. 24. 21, 22. *wherefore is my Lord the King come unto his ſervant?* --- *Let my Lord the King take, and offer up what ſeemeth good unto him: Behold, here be Oxen, for Burnt-Sacrifice, and Threſhing-Inſtruments, and other Inſtruments for Wood; All theſe things did Araunah, as a King, give unto the King.* Lord, take what thou wilt, that which is moſt for thy advantage, though moſt to my loſs: that

which is moſt for thy glory, though moſt for my preſent diſgrace; if here be any thing for thy turn, ſpare it not, but pleaſe thy ſelf. Behold, here is Liberty, Health, Peace, Eaſe, Friends, Wealth, Houſe, Lands, Life, and whatever elſe, through thy grace and mercy, I am, or have. Lord, here I humbly offer thee all, with the unfeigned conſent and joy of my heart, *Thy will be done*, and let thy pleaſure ſtand concerning thy Servant. For what thou leav'ſt me, I will bleſs thee; nay, take all, and my Soul ſhall bleſs thee; Spare none of my Luſts, yea, my moſt beloved Luſts: I would not *They* ſhould any longer live, whoever dye for't. This, my Brethren, would be your honour, as well as your advantage; *All theſe things did Araunah, as a King*: nay, leſs than this will turn but to bad account another day.

2. By way of Reſolution. Go unto God, and ſpread thy Soul at his feet; tell him, as thoſe, *Iſa.* 26. 13. *O Lord, our God, other Lords beſides thee,* (nay before thee) *have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.* The world hath had dominion, the fleſh hath over-rul'd me, and Satan hath been a ſharer with thee: Thou haſt had but half a heart, but half love, but half fear, but half obedience; nay, hardly that. Lord, what Patience is thine! how could'ſt thou ever put it up from the hands of ſo vile, ſo unworthy a worm as I am? oh! I am aſham'd, I am confounded, to think how thou haſt been made to ſerve with my ſins; Now, Lord,

Lord, in thy ſtrength I ſolemnly reſolve and promiſe, that from henceforth it ſhall be ſo no more; but I will make mention of thy name, againſt all other Suits or Claims whatſoever; In vain ſhall the world plead Preſident or Preſcription: or the fleſh, Relation: or Satan, Poſſeſſion: Thy Title and Intereſt ſhall ſtand good againſt all Corrivals. Amen. Lord, ſay Amen.

Thus have you heard what the Voice of the Rod is, in general; Proceed we now to ſhew you in ſpecial what the Voice of this Rod is, under which we are now complaining; And here we may obſerve the ſeveral parts, which are as ſo many ſcourges, or Branches of it: As,

1. The terrible Concuſſion, and Trembling of the *Ark*.

2. That dreadful, and unparallel'd Beeſom of *Plague and Peſtilence*,

3. The devouring *Sword*, and the *Strength of Battel*: a Land-impoveriſhing, and deſolating Calamity.

4. The miſerable Decay of Trade, and Cry of the Poor, and Complaint of the Husbandman.

5. Thoſe Diſmal *Flames* that have laid the Glory and Strength of the Kingdom in Aſhes.

6. The ſad *Diviſions* and grievous Murmurings among the diſcontented Vulgar: with all thoſe Miſeries and Miſchiefs, the natural Iſſues

Iſſues and Effects of this, and the fore-mentioned Judgments.

7. I might add a ſeventh: The Plentiful Increaſe, which every year hath hitherto afforded; which (though in it's ſelf a mercy, yet) conſidered with the general, and horrible abuſe of it, and compar'd with thoſe other Evils we lye under, ſeems to beſpeak our caſe, as *Zophar* deſcribes the Portion of the Wicked, *Job* 20. 22. *In the fulneſs of his ſufficiency he ſhall be in ſtraits.*

Now what the meaning of this complicated Rod ſhould be, as to us, who are exerciſed therewith, is the thing in queſtion. And for the more ſucceſsful management of this great Quæry, I ſhall ſpeak to the Perſons concern'd, diſtinctly: but of the Rod its ſelf, ſomewhat more complexly.

The Perſons, I ſhall conſider, under this twofold general notion.

Friends.

Enemies.

1. Friends: or the People and Church of God. 'Tis Gods uſual method to cauſe Judgment to begin at his own Houſe. *He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches*, Rev. 2. 11, 17, 29. Not to the Kingdoms, or Provinces, but to the Churches of *Aſia*. The ſame method we ſhall obſerve here, and begin firſt with the Church and People of God; at leaſt, thoſe that are viſibly, and by ſpecial Profeſſion ſuch.

ſuch. *Therefore, unto the Church of Epheſus,* (of England) *write: Theſe things ſaith he, that holdeth the ſeven ſtarrs in his right hand, who walketh in the midſt of the ſeven golden Candleſticks: --- I have ſomewhat* (and that not a little) *againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the firſt works; or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candleſtick out of his place, except thou repent.* Loſs of Love in Conjugal Relations, diſſolves the Union; at leaſt, the Peace and Comfort of it. A Wanton Church, will provoke a Jealous God. *And jealouſie is the rage of a man, therefore he will not ſpare in the day of vengeance,* Prov. 6. 24. *Slay utterly young and old, both maids and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my Sanctuary; then they began at the ancient men which were before the Houſe,* Ezek. 9. 6. But more particularly; this Rod hath a ſpecial errand, Rev. 2. 1, 4, 5.

1. To the Heads and Governours of this Church: and theſe are either Civil, or Eccleſiaſtical.

1. Civil, or Magiſterial. But I fear what the iſſue of my Meſſage may be here, with ſome, whoſe Luſts and Intereſts lead them another way. *He that departeth from evil, maketh himſelf a prey*; to thoſe, I mean, whoſe irregular Wills and prejudiced Paſſions, are their only Rule in their arbitrary Execution, Iſa. 59. 15.

or

or Remiſſion of thoſe pious and wholſom Laws, provided by the *Sacred* and *Honourable* Authority whereby they are Deputed. He that reproveth in the City, though never ſo ſeriouſly, ſeaſonably, meekly, loyally, muſt by theſe be put to ſilence. Sin muſt not be ſpoken againſt; we may not ſay that Poyſon is Poyſon, for fear of ſowing, or fomenting Seditious Principles. God hath ſet us for *Watchmen*; but we muſt not proclaim what we ſee, for fear of committing a *Riot*, and diſturbing the common Peace. Oh! how are ſome men afraid they ſhall awake before they come to Hell! Nay, *Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear,* Ezech. 2. 5, 6. *(for they are a rebellious houſe) yet ſhall they know, that there hath been a Prophet among them.* And, O Sirs! Give me leave to ſpeak, and then mock on. 'Tis not my own Cauſe I plead, but Gods; 'tis not any Party or Faction that I purſue, (God knows) I abhorr it from my Soul) but the Intereſt of the Goſpel, and the ſure, and ſettled Peace of theſe poor, afflicted Kingdoms; that the true Cauſe being once throughly diſcover'd and remov'd, the Effects, which we all groan under, may ceaſe.

Oh then! that God would perſwade you to conſider, who it is that hath put the Sword into your hands. *There is no Power but of God; the Powers that be, are ordained of God,* Rom. 13. 1. *Promotion cometh neither from the Eaſt, nor from the Weſt, nor from the South, but God is the Judge, he putteth down one, and*

and ſetteth up another, Pſal. 75. 6, 7. Sirs, God hath made you his *Vice-gerents* in the World; Ye are the *Gods* among men, *Pſal.* 82. 1, 6. The Sword ye bear, is God's Sword; ye are the Stewards of Order and Government, in his Family; the great Affairs of his Houſe are committed to your truſt; the Keys are left with you; the Common Stock and Proviſions of Gods Houſe, are in your hands; ye are our *Nurſes*, the Bottle and the Bag are in your *Tents*; you are the *Cedars* of our *Lebanon*, amongſt the *Myrtles* and *Shrubs*; you are the Stewards of the five Talents; oh, that that you would ſuffer the humble and loyal addreſſes of our hearts to you, that are even ready to break for you! May I ask you, (God will ſhortly ask you, and Conſcience ſhall make him anſwer) have you duly conſidered the Relation ye ſtand in, both towards God, and towards us? Do you know what a Burden lies on your Shoulders? *The Earth, and all the Inhabitants thereof, are diſſolved*, ſayes the Pſalmiſt, *I bear up the Pillars thereof*, Pſal. 75. 3. You are the *Atlas*'s of the World; the Pillars of the Earth are your burden. May I ask now, Whether hath been more admired, more deſigned, more deſired by you, the Honour, or the Duty of your Relation? You are Gods Husbandmen, and are to plow, and to ſow, for the ſupply of the whole Family. Sirs, this is your charge from the God of Heaven and Earth; in this honourable, and burdenſome Office, *God* hath placed you, through what

what mediation soever your secular Deputations have been obtained. *It is God that putteth down one, and raiseth up another.*

2. Consider, I beseech you, for whom it is you bear the Sword; Must not the Judge proclaim his Commission, in the name of him from whom he received it? Doth not the Fountain return through all the Creeks and passages of its Circuit, to the Ocean from whence it came forth? this then is both Legal and Natural; Who dares say, that he rules for himself? who, but God, can claim an Independant Government? Heathens indeed may boast themselves after this rate; *Is not this great Babylon, that I have built, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my Majesty?* But far be it from Christians, so to blaspheme the Authority of Heaven. We may take this for granted then, that 'tis for God you profess to bear the Sword; but bear with me now, in this one word more.

3. How have you born the Sword? O, Sirs! I humbly beseech you, censure not my loyal, though familiar, boldness with you. 2 Cor. 5. 11 *Knowing the terrour of the Lord, we* cannot but *perswade men.* The day of Judgment is shortly coming, and, methinks, I should need to say no more. *Rulers are not a terrour to good works, but to the evil: for he is the minister of God to thee for good,* Rom. 13. 3, 4. Your Honours are not your own, but God's, whose Stewards you are; and, *it is required in Stewards, that a man be found faithful.* Your five

five Talents had need be ten in the day of Account; *For unto whom much is given, of him shall be much required*, Luk. 12. 48. That the Judgments of God are several wayes gone forth against us, I hope is not only felt, but in some measure acknowledged on all sides: That Sin is the cause of this displeasure, methinks, should not be doubted: That both High and Low are guilty before God, I hope will not be denied; For, *Nemo sine crimine vivit, There is not a just man upon earth, that liveth, and sinneth not*, Eccles. 7. 10. Great men, have great Temptations, and oftentimes great miscarriages too; the greatness whereof is much augmented by their personal, or relative greatness, οὐ ῥᾴδιόν ἐστι φέρειν ἐμμελῶς τὰ εὐτυχήματα, sayes *Aristot*: It is a very hard matter, for poor Mortals, rightly to deport the burdens of their Honour or Happiness. 'Twas *Plato*'s answer once to the *Cyrenians*, who had desired him to write them some Political, and Moral Institutions, for the Settlement of their decaying Estate; *Perdifficile est condere leges tam felicibus*, It is a very hard matter to lay the obligation of a Law on those that are (in their own account) so happy. Sirs, the Lords *Oy!* is upon you; I may not, I dare not, I will not, touch the Lords *Anointed*, nor blaspheme that Authority, under whose wings I expect Protection. *Rebuke not an Elder, but entreat him as a Father*, 1 Tim. 5. 1. Far be it from me, for ever, to speak evil of Dignities; or any way to kindle, or abett Seditious Principles or

Practi-

Practices, either in my self or others: Yet give me leave, in all humility, from the Word of God, to assure you, that the only way to a true, and lasting Peace, is to make Peace with the God of Peace. *When a mans wayes please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him*, Proverbs 16. 7. The only way to have Judgment effectually removed, is, to remove it in the Cause of it; and in happy order unto this blessed End, I shall say no more here, but, The Lord awaken, and direct, both the *Rulers* and *Ruled*.

2. To the Ecclesiastical, or Ministerial Heads of the Church; and,

1. To those in present being.

2. To those that are laid aside.

1. To those in present Being. I dare not pass you by unsaluted; though I have no Court-Complement for you. I beseech you, duly to consider the Charge of your holy Office; and your Discharge of it. These things, Sirs, you are better able to instruct me in, than I you; therefore, let my Silence plead my Modesty, while I humbly pass by, with the Prayer of the *Church* for you, That God, at length, would work that *Great Marvel*, in sending down upon you, *the healthful Spirit of his grace*. So farewel, until I meet you on even ground, at the day of Judgment.

2. *To those that are laid aside*. My Reverend Fathers, and Dear Brethren! Though I am but a Child, yet suffer me to speak as a

Child;

Child; whose affections are great, though his strength and deserts be small. The *Message* is sent unto the *Angels* of the *Churches*; and these are called the *seven starrs in the right hand of God*, Rev. 1. 20. Now give me leave but to paraphrase on this *Emblem*.

1. *Starrs are heavenly Creatures.* 'Tis true, there are Starrs (Meteors, or Comets rather) who are heavenly, only as to their present *Site*, or appearance; These are the *Wandring Stars Jude* speaks of, *Jude* v. 13. Exhalations, whose Composition is Earthy and Unclean; whose Elevation is Ominous, not only to themselves, but to the places where they Aspect: But these are none of the Fixed Stars, in the right hand of God. Oh, what manner of persons ought we to have been, in all holy, and heavenly conversation! *No man that warreth, intangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him, who hath chosen him to be a Souldier*, 2 Tim. 2. 4. Our Call is from Heaven, our Employment is Heavenly, our Lord, our Home, our Happiness, our Hopes, our All, is in Heaven; should not then our Affections have been Heavenly? our Minds and Aims, Heavenly? our Words, Devotions, and Actions, Heavenly? And hath it been indeed so with us? I am speaking now (I hope) to such as know, how how to set Conscience on work, in the serious, and penitent Reflection on these things. Oh, Sirs! why may not this be one great part of Gods Controversie with us? *Pride* and *Covetousness* was the great *Cry*

the World hath taken up againſt us; the Lord knows, it hath been too true of too many of us. Han't we been too *thoughtful*, and *Gentile*-like, what to eat, and what to drink, and wherewithal to be cloathed, while we have preach't, and preſs't the contrary on our Hearers? Why, Hath God broken the *Staves* in our hands, and ſtript us of our *Coats* and *Scrip*, without which, we could not truſt him in our journey? Was not our temporizing with the Modes, and Manners of the World, both in our Perſons and Families, become the open, and juſt ſcandal of our holy Calling? Where was that Charity, that Humility, that Self-denial, that Mortification, that heavenly Heart and Life, that holy, and ſtrict Godlineſs, without which, we were condemning others to the Pit of Hell? Was it not time for God to take down ſuch foul Veſſels, and to ſcour off that duſt and filth they had contracted? No wonder, if our *Duſt* hath brought us to the *Duſt*; that we are fallen among the *Potts*, and cauſed to lick the *Duſt* we were ſo greedy of. Sirs, I hope you will not cenſure my plainneſs, and liberty of ſpeech. I have taken upon me to ſpeak to ſuch, as can far better inſtruct both themſelves and me; and, I confidently perſwade my ſelf, that theſe are no ſtrange motions with you, nor *Wounds* that will ranckle.

2. *Starrs are ordained for light. Ye are the Light of the world*, ſayes Chriſt, *Matth.* 5. 14. And, *Let your light ſo ſhine before men,*

men, that they may ſee your good works, ver. 16. You are the *Lamps* of the Sanctuarie, whoſe *oyl* was to be *pure oyl-olive*; and the *Candleſticks for Light*, which were to be of *beaten Gold*. We are God's *Apothecaries*, whom he hath ſent with his *Eye-ſalve*, to recover a poor, blind, World. Now, I beſeech you, let us conſider, what *Lights* have we been in the *Sphears* wherein God had plac't us? Did we ſtudy to enlighten thoſe that ſate in Darkneſs? To ſpeak to the Capacities and Conſciences, in the Convicting Evidence, and Goſpel-ſimplicity of the Spirit? Han't we (too many at leaſt, and too often) endeavoured to imblazon our own Parts, or Learning? Han't we been more affected with our own words, than with our Maſter's Work? and dreſt up the pure, and ſimple Truth, as an Harlot? Han't we ſet the Lords *Candle* under the *Buſhel* of our private Honour, or Intereſt? No wonder then, that God hath remov'd his Candleſtick, and caus'd our Candle to go out. Have we been conſtant, burning, and ſhining Lights? or too-like, poor, dwindling Tapers, or the faint Flaſhes of an *Ignis lambens*, rather burdenſom than uſeful? Have we been like Stars indeed, that appear brighteſt in the moſt cold, and bitter night? Oh, my Brethren! that we could ſit down now, and conſider, as we ſit by our *Lahai-roi*, *where thou God ſeeſt me*; Why is my Sun ſet at Noon? Why have the black Shades of the Night prevented me? Is not this, much my own doing? Of what

Levit. 24. 20. *Num.* 8. 4. *Rev.* 3. 18.

nature or kind was my Light? Had I any other than what I bare in my hand? Of what use was my Light, either to my self or others? What can my people witness for me? What can my Family, my Wife, my Children, my Sojourners, my Servants, say for me? have they, or might they, have walk't in my light? nay, have I even forc't them to light their Candles at mine? Hath the Word of God dwelt richly in my Head, in my Heart, in my House, in all wisdom? or, han't my Family been much like other mens? as Ignorant, as Idle, as Proud, and, it may be, as Prophane, as many others? Han't the *Springs* of Knowledg been too much confin'd to, and lockt up in my *Pulpit*, as if I were a Minister no where but there? And is not this much of the matter, that God hath now lockt up the Pulpit from me; that he hath cast me out of his *Eden*, and planted his *Flaming Sword, which turneth every way, to keep the way of this Tree of life?* Oh, that such thoughts might pierce our hearts! now that we are sitting with our broken *Pitchers* by those Waters of Affliction!

3. *Starrs are appointed for Influence. Ye are the Salt of the Earth*, saies Christ, *Math.* 5. 13. Oh! what a savoury, and seasoning Influence have we had, on those with whom we have had to do? Salt, you know, hath a vertue to suck out corrupting humours, and to preserve from putrefaction; Alas! can we say, that our *Patients* have never Gangrenated under

der our hands, for lack of proper, savory, and seasonable Preservatives? In *Rev.* 8. 11. we read of a *Starr*, whose name was *Wormwood*; *which fell from Heaven, as it were a Lamp, & it fell on the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters: and the third part of the waters became wormwood.* Now hath our influence been like that of the *Tree* at the Waters of *Marah*, *Exod.* 15. 25. of a cleansing, healing nature? or, too much like this *Star*, whose Name, and Nature was *wormwood*? Hath our Communication and Conversation, both in publick, and in private, been so seasoned with *Salt*, that our very Presence, hath daunted the Impudence of Sin? and our Countenances been a rebuke to a Wanton, Licentious, Prophane World? May it be said of us, as of *John* the Baptist, that *Herod* feared him, and observed him? Hath the austerity, and holiness of our lives been such, as could command respect from an *Herod*? and fasten Convictions, with Authority, on the hearts of the proudest Sinners? Have we been like the *Pleiades*, whose *sweet influence* hath overcome those malign, and *Saturnine* Spirits, over which God hath made us *vertical*? Or rather, han't we been like the Moon, whose growing big and full, hath been fatal to the sick and weak in our Flocks? And now that we are cast out, as unsavoury *Salt, to be trodden under foot of men*; the Lord humble us! pity us! spare us!

Iob 38. 31.

4. *Starrs are ordained for Direction.* *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,* 1 Cor. 11. 1. No *Sea* in the World is so dangerous, and fatal to *Mariners*, as this *Sea* of the World to *Man*. So many Rocks and Shoals, and Quick-sands, and Hirricane-Storms, as every Passage and Step is attended with; what need is there of faithful, and skilful *Pilots*? 'Twas a sad Voyage for *Paul* and his Companions, *Act.* 27. 20. *When neither Sun, nor Starrs, in many dayes, appeared, and no small tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved, was then taken away.* God hath set us for *Sea-marks*, because the Road is dangerous, that scarce one of a thousand comes safe to Land. Or as the *Star in the East*, for the direction of those that are so wise as to steer by such a *Point*. Alas! how many rich *Vessels* of precious Merchandise, have there miscarried irreparably, and eternally? and, it may be, much through our sinful Neglects; either we have been obscur'd, and not to be seen, when we should have appear'd for God, in the desperate hazzard of poor souls; or have been so general and uncertain, that the purblind World could not apprehend us; or else, have been out of the way, and deviated from our sacred *Spheare*, and so led them by an evil Example, either directly, or accidentally, on the very neck of ruine. Oh! how should it cut our hearts, to consider, how many brave, and hopeful Vessels, we have sad cause to fear, have for ever miscarried under our Conduct, and that in serene, and

Hab-

Halcion Floods! The Lord convince us! forgive us! and have mercy upon us!

5. Laſtly, *The Seven Stars are an united Conſtellation.* Therefore Chriſt compares the *Breaſts* of his Church, to *two young Roes, that are Twins*, Cant. 7. 3. And, to a *company of horſes in Pharaoh's charriots*, Cant. 1. 9. Not only for their Strength and Beauty, but for their Union, and Oneneſs of Work and Way. And is not this another, and not the leaſt ground of the breach that God hath made upon us? even our Diſſentions and Animoſities, our grievous Diviſions, both in Judgment and Heart; our pertinacious inſiſting on undeterminable, and frivolous *Quiddities*, and circumſtantial Differences. Beſides, thoſe private Grudges, and ſupercilious Diſtances, ariſing from perſonal Preferments, or carnal Intereſts; And in the mean while, have fed Chriſts Babes with *Blood* inſtead of *Milk*, and *Stones* inſtead of *Bread.* And, while we have, with ſuch violence, been drawing, every one his own way, have between us, even rent the Chariots of the Church of Chriſt in pieces; and for theſe things hath God rent us in pieces. The ſins of Miniſters, are *Nouns of Multitude*; they ſin by heaps, and in whole ſums; as the Meaſures and Weights of the Sanctuary are larger than any others, ſo are the Sins of the Sanctuary too.

2. As the Rod ſpeaks to the Heads, and Governours, ſo alſo to the *particular Societies* of this Church of God; not only to the whole

Body of the Church of *Aſia*, but particularly to *Epheſus*, and *Smyrna*, and *Laodicea*, *&c.* the ſeveral Members and Congregations of the *Aſian* Church. So, when God had promiſed to reſtore his People, *Zech.* 12. He promiſed withal, *to pour out upon them, the Spirit of Grace and Supplication*, ver. 10. and *the Spirit of Mourning and Repentance*, ver. 11. *The whole Land ſhall mourn*, and not only ſo, but, *every Family apart: the Family of the Houſe of David apart, and their wives apart.* So, *the Family of the Houſe of Nathan, and of Levi*; both King, Prophet, and Prieſt, by their Families apart. Now, as we have any of us ſtood related as Members of this, or that Society, or Family, of the Church of God; it concerns us to conſider, what the Voice of the Rod is, by which, he is now calling us to mourning and ſupplication, by our Families apart.

1. Conſider, whether the Worm of Self-endedneſs hath not been at the Root of the Matter. Brethren! for the Lords ſake, deal faithfully with your own hearts. What was it that mov'd you, in the firſt place, to engage in ſuch, or ſuch a Society? Was Self wholly laid aſide, and utterly diſown'd, as well in Heart, as in Word, from any partnerſhip, in your Ends? Oh, that I could faſten theſe ſerious Queſtions on your Conſciences! Were you fully convinc'd, from the invincible light of the infallible Rule, that this was the very way of God? and the Scripture-Diſcipline that

he

he would have you to yield your obedience to, the very *Pattern* that was given in the *Mount*? No other Burden, than what we have received by Divine, and Apoſtolical Authority? And was this your End and Aim in Earneſt? that you might be made more conformable unto Chriſt, your Head, in Holineſs, and in the life and power of Duty? and walk in nearer, and more ſpiritual Communion with him? That you might receive more immediatly of his Fulneſs, and dwell nearer the Spring-head of Grace, as well as of Comfort? Had you a real Deſign againſt Sin, not only in others, but eſpecially in your ſelves? And is this the very Truth, and Ground of the matter, that did engage you? Dare you look God and Death in the face, appealing from your Conſciences, unto his All-ſearching Tribunal, that this is the very truth? Did you joyn with this, or that Society, out of no proud, undervaluing, or Schiſmatical ſpirit towards your brethren, or over-weening Conceit of your ſelves, or your own party? but becauſe you verily apprehended it, the way of cleareſt Scripture-certainty and ſecurity; and the neareſt, and readieſt way, to joyn in a fuller, and more intimate Communion with Chriſt? And was it the deep ſenſe of that weariſom load of Sin and Guilt, that mov'd you from within, in obedience to a clear Command, to cloſe with this way? Nay, Were all your Expectations alway from above your enjoyments? Oh, Chriſtians! Can your Conſciences comfort you, con-

concerning all theſe things? Was there not an itching deſire to ſeem as Holy as the beſt, or as a more refined Fraternity of *Rechabites*, fiſhing for *Proſelytes*, to build your ſelves a *Name*? or elſe ſome mercenary fear, of incurring the hard thoughts, or diſreſpects of ſome, whoſe good will you valued? Was it not more to gratifie, or to engage Friends, or to promote ſome worldly Intereſt, or to find out ſome new Diſcoveries, or to inhance the rate of your Gifts and Parts, above the Common ſize? was it not ſomething of this nature, that prevail'd with you, more than any thing elſe? And, could you ever expect, that a Building ſhould proſper, on ſuch a Foundation? Not that I condemn all; but I would that all ſhould condemn themſelves. Oh, my brethren! will you be upright with God, who knows all that is within you; and confeſs to him the whole truth? Oh! take heed, that That be not now conceal'd, which, one day, you will wiſh were pardon'd.

2. Since you have engag'd your ſelves in a Choiſe Society, and Communion of Saints; How have you behav'd your ſelves,

Towards your Teachers and Rulers?

Towards one another?

Towards them that are without?

1. Towards your Teachers and Rulers?

1. Have you undervalued neither their Perſons, nor their work? The Apoſtle ſeems to begg your Honour; yet not for our, but for your own ſakes, 1 *Theſ.* 5. 13, 14. *We beſeech you,*

you, Brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you, in the Lord, and admoniſh you; and eſteem them very highly in love, for their works ſake. Eſteem them very highly in love. Not with that Secular Adoration, wherewith the world is wont to court her *Darlings*; but with your cordial, and unfeigned affection. Honour them, not ſo much with *Cap* and *Knee*, and the *Elogies* of praiſe, and *Hyperbolical Encomium's*, which, ordinarily, is but the ſtinking breath of a rotten heart. But, *eſteem them in love, and for their works ſake.* Not ſo much, for their Learning, or Parts, or external Preferments, but for their *Work* and Office ſake; for their Meſſage, and for their Maſter's ſake. Now begin to reckon with your own hearts, how guilty have you been here? Han't your Oxen, that have laboured but for your back and belly; your Servants, that have been your Drudges for the body; your *Appendices* of honour and pleaſure, had more of your hearts, than thoſe that have been tugging at the *Oars*, to harbour you and yours, in the Land of *Promiſe*? That have been praying, and ſtudying, and watching, night and day, for your Souls? Han't you been ready to ſlander them, to cenſure their Doctrine, Elocution, or Method? and to take up hard thoughts of them, on the leaſt occaſion of offence? Have you never been ambitiouſly laying hands on the Ark; yea, when it hath but ſeem'd to ſhake? and quarrelling with

Moſes,

Numb. 16. 3. *Moſes*, as *Korah*, and his Faction, *Are not all the Congregation holy?*

2. Han't you, on the other hand, had their Perſons or Gifts in Admiration? han't you ſo highly admir'd ſuch a man's Abilities, or Eloquence; that you have ſlighted another's Graces? *Every one ſaith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, &c. Is Chriſt divided? was Paul crucified for you?* 1 Cor. 1. 12, 13. Chriſt hath made us your Watchmen, and your Servants, in the work of your Souls; and hath not ſet us up for Idols, nor Saviours. The diverſity of Streams, ſhould cauſe us to admire the fulneſs, and riches of the Fountain, and not to adore the poor Channel. Oh, let this be a piece of your Chriſtian Learning, *Not to think of men, above that which is written*, as the Apoſtle adviſes, 1 *Cor.* 4. 6.

2. Towards one another.

1. Where is that exemplary love, and brotherly-kindneſs, that ſhould be between ſuch ſpiritually near Relations? With what perſwading Motives, and compaſſionate arguments, doth the Apoſtle urge his *Philippians*, *chap.* 2. 1, 2. *If there be therefore, any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like minded, having the ſame love, being of one accord, of one mind.* But how apt have we been to think the worſt, and ſpeak the worſt, by one another, and to aggravate each others in-

infirmities? How hard a matter is it to take a rebuke at the hand of a brother, especially an inferiour? or to give a reproof with that seriousness, prudence, meekness, self-denyal, and tender affection, and charitable hopes, and longing desires of their good, as becomes Christians? Oh, what reason had God to take up his rod against us, and to let in the Flood upon us, while we have been wandring every one his own way, and magnifying our own Inventions, envying at, and clashing with, one another!

2. Can you clear your selves of an affected singularity in your way? Were you not ready to look on your selves, as some body; and, it may be, somewhat more than others? Let me tell you, an affected singularity, either in Judgment or Practice, savours of a proud, and a false heart. Have you never entertain'd that in your hearts or lives, which you were never, from the Word of God, convinc'd in Conscience, to be a truth, or a duty; only because it liked you, or by your Teachers was offer'd you, or that you might seem to be the Authors of some new Garb in Religion, and such as act by more elevated Principles? Well! God hath now raised a storm, which, I hope, will quench all the sparks among us, that are not of his own kindling; and let us see the pure Lamp of the Sanctuary, from all those Bastard Tapers, and stinking Snuffs of mans invention, or the Devils lighting

3. Hath there not been a spirit of Censori-

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ouſneſs towards all others, that have not been of the ſame Society, or Judgment, in, or about ſome Circumſtances; that have been without the bounds of your own *Monopolies?* What animoſities, and heart-burnings have there been? what glorying, and magnifying your own way? as if Salvation were not attainable, without the verge of ſuch a Society. Certainly, this is no other, than a more ſpiritual, and refined kind of Popery.

3. Towards them that are without.

1. Hath there been that prudent, inoffenſive, winning carriage toward them, that might heap coals on their heads, and commend your holy Profeſſion to them; at leaſt, to leave them without excuſe, in the great day? *Walk in wiſdome toward them that are without*, Col. 4. 5. The Carnal World can't judge of Spiritual things, but in a carnal manner; 'tis the wiſdom therefore, of a Chriſtian, to become himſelf with their Capacities, though not with their Corruptions. Thoſe that live by ſenſe, are led by ſenſe; and judge according to ſenſe, and outward appearance. *What is thy Beloved, more than another beloved?* Cant. 5. 9. They can't ſee that beauty that lies within the skin, whereby the King's daughter is all glorious within. I ſhall not ſtand to anſwer all thoſe Quarrels, that occaſionally you may have with them, only thus; You know the Royal Law, and what reſpect ſhould be had, both to their poor ſouls, and to the credit of the Goſpel. 'Twas the Apoſtles complaint, 1 *Cor.* 6. 6. *Brother*

ther goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Should we not rather ſuffer wrong on our bodies, than offer wrong to their ſouls? You know how you pray; *Forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors*; and what ſtreſs is laid on this Condition? *Matth.* 6. 14. *Mar.* 11. 26. Debts are diſtinguiſhed into *Civil* and *Criminal*. The firſt indeed may be retained without ſin, if it be not exacted without Conſcience, and Charity, and due reſpect, and compaſſion to our brethrens Bodies and Souls. But the other is freely to be remitted, on the account of Chriſt, and our obedience to him, and hope in him. O, take heed, that your froward, ſullen, and moroſe carriage and diſpoſition, do not harden, and juſtly prejudice thoſe, that might otherwiſe have been won, even ſuch, as were once ſome of you, be they, at preſent, never ſo vile. I could inlarge my ſelf here, and not without need; But, *Verbum ſat ſapienti*; *A word to the wiſe*. A little Armour rightly applyed, is ſufficient *Panoplie*.

2. What affectionate pity hath there been ſhew'n to their poor Souls? Certainly, their Souls are formed of the ſame immaterial ſubſtance with ours; as immortal, as pretious, in their own nature and original, as ours; Maſſes of the ſame lump, faſhion'd on the ſame wheel of Divine Power and Wiſdom; were once as fair for Election, and had as juſt a claim to the Kingdom, as we. If ever we are ſav'd, it muſt be through the undeſerved pity, and merits of ano-

another. And surely, where Christ communicates his merits, he communicates some proportion of his Spirit too. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil; whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother*, 1 Joh. 3. 10. Now, we know, that *Brother* is taken in Scripture, both in a Natural, Civil, and Spiritual sense; nor can I think that it is spoken *Abstractly* as to either, in this place; but rather *Comprehensively* of all. For, we know who hath said, *Love your Enemies, do good to them which hate you*, Luk. 6. 27. And *Matth.* 5. 24. 25. we find, that *Brother* and *Adversary*, are used *Exegetically* of each other. Nay, the close of that *chapter* speaks exactly, and Argumentatively to my purpose. *Love your Enemies*, &c. *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven; for he maketh his Sun to rise on the evil, and on the good;---For, if ye love them which love you, what reward have you? do not even the Publicans the same?* Though we can't find that love of delight and complacency, as there is with those spiritual branches, of one and the same stock; yet there is a love of Benevolence and pity, which is their due from us, their fellow Creatures. O, pity their poor Souls, instead of cursing, or exclaiming on them! Would you not pity, and pray for them, should they come with tears in their eyes, to begg your prayers? pity them, and pray for them, now much more, for that they cannot pity themselves!

ſelves! Is not a man that is diſtracted, and knows not what he doth, an object of pity, and not of hatred or revenge, though he revile, and curſe, nay, though he rent you? *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*, Luk. 23. 34.

3. What ſerious pains have you taken, to convince, and perſwade them? Would you not even hazzard your lives, to ſave a mad man from murdering himſelf, or your neighbour's houſe from burning? Would you not lay violent hands upon them, and ſuffer abuſes from them, if you found them ſleeping, in ſuch a caſe? And are their Houſes, and Bodies, of more worth than their Souls? Ah! with what bitter looks and curſes, will theſe poor wretches depart from you, at the great Day! who, having obtained mercy your ſelves, did ſhew no mercy; that having the ſnares broken for you, wherein you, as well as they, were once bound, and being happily eſcaped your ſelves, had never a hand to help a periſhing brother! Certainly, our Cruelty towards the Souls of thoſe we call our Enemies, may well be inſerted as one *Item* of that Rod that lies upon us. I may not inſiſt here, on all the Caſes, and Cavils, that might be objected; only let me caution you. Take heed of excuſing your ſelves from that Duty, which God will require in the great day of Account. And, let me alſo tell you, that, though you can't do for them, what you would do; yet, were you as prudent, as humble, as compaſſionate, as vigilant, as ſelf-deny-

ing, as active, as you ſhould be, and, as one day, you may wiſh you had been, you might have done far more, than you have done for them.

3. The Rod hath alſo a Voice to the Individual Members of this Church of God. As every Family, ſo every *Soul* of the Family, ſhall mourn apart. God hath not only Family-offences, Congregation-ſins; but Perſonal Miſcarriages, to reckon with us for. He is calling us out, one by one, as thoſe that accuſed the *woman*, *Joh.* 8. 9. What I have to ſay here, I ſhall couch under theſe two Queſtions.

How have you beſtowed your Talents?

How have you kept your Watch?

1. *How have you beſtowed your Talents? The Kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a farr country, who called his own ſervants, and delivered unto them his goods; and unto one he gave five Talents, to another two,* Matth. 25. 14, 15. Our Lord hath intruſted us with his Goods; He hath left all the Riches of his houſe in our hands; We have received our Talents, our Meaſures, and Proportions. Now let me ſeriouſly ask you, and my ſelf, theſe following Queſtions.

1. *Have we weigh'd our Talents*, and conſider'd what they are? You will tell your Mony, though it be after your own Father; eſpecially if it be but borrowed, or entruſted Mony, which muſt again be accounted for. Chriſtian! Go aſide, and tell thy Mony from the hands of

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thy Heavenly Father. Take a juſt account of that, for which thou muſt ſhortly give a juſt account. Book down thy *Receipts*, both for Number, Nature, and Weight. Thus much in Ordinaries, and thus much in Extraordinaries; Thus many years Time, Health, Proviſion, Quiet; Thus many Offers of Grace hath God made me, and thus long waited for my return; Thus many ſignal Deliverances from Enemies, Diſaſters, and Sickneſſes, and from unſeen Dangers, God only knows how many. What large Inventories might the meaneſt of us draw, of our external enjoyments, which is but the leaſt part of the Talent we have received? If we look into the *Little-World* of the Soul, we ſhall find it fuller of Mercies, than the Heavens are of Starrs. Beſides all that Goodneſs that God had prepared to meet us at the very Womb, there hath been a continual Acceſſion and Succeſſion of new Mercies, with the gracious preſervation of the old. Alas! we may as well number the Drops of an hours thickeſt Rain, as the Mercies of an hours Time. Yet take as particular and diſtinct knowledge of them as you can; for doubtleſs the Account will be particular: God hath *when*, and *where*, and *what*, and *How often*, in his Book, even to the utmoſt *Farthing*, Matth. 5. 26.

2. *Have we conſider'd whoſe our Talents are?* So far the ſlothful ſervant was in the right; *Lo, there, thou haſt that is thine*, *Matth.* 25. 25. But han't we rather greedily

ſwept Mercies into our Laps, as Thieves, that are robbing the houſe; and taking all for our own, as thoſe, that never think to be reſponſible; as if we were the abſolute Lords of all the Mercies we enjoy? And is not God concern'd in ſuch a caſe, to vindicate his own Intereſt? Remember, Chriſtians, 'tis Gods ground you tread upon, and plant, and build, and ſow upon; his Creatures you feed on; his Wool, and Flax, and Silks, you cloath and deck your ſelves with; his Gold and Silver, you are hoarding, or trading with; his Air you breathe in, and not your own. 'Tis his Word, his Promiſes, his Sacraments, his Graces, his Spirit, his Help, and all the hidden Treaſuries of his Goſpel, the bleſſed Proviſions of your Souls, they are his, and not yours. You never made, you never purchaſed, you never repair'd any of theſe, nor can you do it.

Obj. But, may you ſay, This is true indeed of the men of the World; they have only a *Civil*, but no *Evangelical* Right, to any thing they poſſeſs: But, what, Hath the *Child* no more right than the *Servant*? *Godlineſs hath the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. And God hath promiſed, with Chriſt, to give us *all things*, and that *freely*, Rom. 8. 32. So ſays the Apoſtle; *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the World, or Life, or Death, or things preſent, or things to come; all are yours.* 1 Cor. 3. 23.

Anſw. The ſame Apoſtle alſo ſaith, that, *The Heir,*

as

as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a ſervant, though he be Lord of all, Gal. 4. 1. God hath not given us the Impropriation, but the Uſe of his Goods. The heir hath no more actual propriety than the ſervant, as long as he is under age, only here's the difference; what the Child enjoyes, he enjoyes by virtue of his Relation, and this Relation is grounded on that Covenant between the Father and Chriſt, and between Chriſt and his choſen; by virtue whereof, they ſtand the Adopted Children of God, through Chriſt; ſo that what we receive, we receive on the account of this Covenant, which hath made us over unto God and Chriſt, and God and Chriſt, and all his Promiſes, over unto us; the Inheritance of all is ours, though the actual poſſeſſion be reſerved, till we are, through Grace, capacitated for it; all things that are neceſſary, *pro hîc, & nunc*, unto Life, or Godlineſs, we have in *Hand*, the reſt in *Hope*; yet, both what we have in *Hand*, and in *Hope*, we hold in *Capite*, and were never deſigned for the Abſolute Lords of it. He that received the *five Talents*, could no more call them his own, than he that received but *one*; neither could the Improvement alter the Property; but both the *Principal*, and the *Increaſe*, were their Lords, *Matth.* 25. 27. Our Title is *Evangelical* indeed, and therefore not *Legal*: Legal, as to man, but not as to God. *why then doſt thou glory, as if thou hadſt not received it?* 1 Cor. 4. 7.

3. *Have you consider'd, why those Talents were intrusted with you?* The reason why with you, rather than with others, is, because you are his ἴδιοι δοῦλοι, *own servants*, his household-Hinds. You have been brought up at his hand, and know his Work, and his Will; his Expectations are great from you, he seems to have greater confidence of our Care, and Skill, and Diligence, and Faithfulness, than of Strangers. And then the Reasons, why he hath, as it were, put it out of his own hands, and cast it into ours, are, Because he will learn us, by these smaller things, to merchandize and trade, with and for Heaven; he hath adventured this little stock with us, to begin with, and to train us up for higher Employments. And, that his Goods might not lie dead, and useless, he hath committed the *Factorage* to us, that the *Returns* might be made to his Advantage. Now this is that should have taken up our thoughts; What a Rate hath God set on such, or such a Mercy? And how shall I manage my Course, to bring them up to Gods price? What a circumspect care should I have, to commerce with honest, and sufficient Dealers! The World is a *Broken Merchant*, and its Wares are of no value in my Lord's Country. The Devil is too subtil, I dare not trust him; his design is to deceive. The Flesh will baffle, and my own heart deals upon Day, and is wont to pay with Promises, and Delayes, and Protestations of his good Meaning; How dare I venture my Lords Goods in such hands? *My goodness shall extend to the Saints*

Saints, that are in the Earth, and to the Excellent, in whom is all my delight, Pſal. 16. 3. *A froward heart ſhall depart from me, I will not know a wicked perſon*, Pſal. 101. 4. *I will have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, but rather reprove them*, Eph. 5. 11. Oh, my brethren! how many thouſand Mercies have we beſtowed on our Luſts? how many *Packs* of our Maſter's *Goods* have we rid our hands of, which we are never like to ſee one penny for? And can we wonder then, that our Lord is come to reckon with us? May not God juſtly charge us with Riot and Unfaithfulneſs, and take the Talents from us? Certainly, that accurſed, ſlothful ſervant, that hid his Lord's mony, ſeems far more excuſable than we; for, though he did no good with his Talent, yet he was accus'd of no hurt he did with it. Surely, Pride had never ſo impudently dared God to his face, had it not been for us. The Fleſh had never took ſuch head, had not we pamper'd it. The World had never claim'd ſuch Corrivalty with God, had it not been trading with us, in our Faith, Hope, and Love. May not God charge us, as once he charged his own People? *Ezek.* 16. 17, 18, 19. *Thou haſt alſo taken thy fair Jewels, of my gold, and of my ſilver, which I had given thee, and madeſt to thy ſelf Images of men, and didſt commit whoredom with them*; *And tookeſt thy broidered garments, and coveredſt them*; *and thou haſt ſet mine oile, and mine incenſe before them. My meat alſo, which I gave thee, fine flower, and*

oyl, and hony, wherewith I fed thee, thou haſt even ſet it before them, for a ſweet ſavour: and thus it was, ſaith the Lord God. Surely, had our Maſter no other ſtock, but this that is in our hands, we ſhould quickly have undone both him and our ſelves. *Therefore, I will return, and take away my Corn in the time thereof, and my Wine in the ſeaſon thereof, and I will recover my Wool, and my Flax, given to cover her nakedneſs,* Hoſ. 2. 9. Ah! what ſerious reflections, and thoughts of heart, do theſe things call for! What ſad, and general complaints, are there of bad Trading in the world? God hath broken the ſtaff in the midſt of us, and hedg'd us in on every ſide; the labour of the Artificer ceaſeth, and the Merchant begins to mourn: Men of great Engagements and Dependance, are ſhattering, like broken Reeds, and the Plagues of God, both at home, and abroad, have waſted us. Are not theſe ſome of your complaints to God? And may not God retort the ſame Complaints on us, and ſpread our very tears, as dung, on our faces? The Plague of our heart is ſpread to ſuch a height, that he hath even nail'd up the Doors of his *Houſe* againſt us, that there is little Trading for Heaven. *What hath my Beloved to do in my houſe, ſeeing ſhe hath wrought lewdneſs with many? and the holy fleſh is paſſed from thee,* Jer. 11. 15. God ſeems to ſtand off, and to avoid his own High-way, as if he were afraid we ſhould come near, to touch his holy thing, and pollute them, as we have done.

4. Shall

4. Shall I ask you, *What hath your esteems of your Talents been?* how have you valued them? Possibly such as have related to the outer man, the present carnal ease, or advantage of the Flesh, have been over-rated; yet 'tis strange to see on what base, and low terms, they are parted with. Tell me, Christian, Hast thou never sold thy Ambition a good penny-worth of these things, for a little honour, or preferment; nay, for the bare promise, or hopes of it, which thou mayst now set among thy desperate Debts? Hast thou never sold thy Lusts a huge bargain, for a little pleasure, though it were entail'd with shame, and pain enough? Are there none of thy Master's Goods to be redeem'd out of the hands of Revenge, and Injustice? Is there none of thy Lord's Money to be rak'd out of the Draught of thy Gluttony and Drunkenness? Ah, Sirs! Are these things but poor, empty notions, think you? will they come to nothing in the great day of Account? Han't you dealt, in your reposed trust, as the unjust Steward, *Luk.* 16. 6, 7. written fifty, or three score, for an hundred, on your Master's Bill? and will Conscience witness for you, that all hath been right and just? though now it lie under your Bribes and Flatteries, or Fears; certainly, when God shall examin it upon Oath, it will speak the whole truth: When every Corner shall be searcht, and every Bill summ'd up, and every Mite accounted, either thou, or thy Surety must be responsible. As for our Spiritual Talents, at what a rate have

have they been proſtituted? Such as have not been for the Common Market of the World, as the convictions, the humbling, and mortifying Motions of the Holy Spirit, ſuch as are not for *Ceſar's* turn; no friends to the Fleſh; theſe have been often ſent back, by the hand that brought them, as unprofitable Druggs, the great burdens that have troubled us. Surely, prophane *Eſau* never prophaned his Birthright, as we have prophaned ours. Han't we dealt with Gods moſt precious Gold, and thoſe rich Jewels, that have been lockt up in the Cabinet of Divine Counſel and Love, from all the Ages of the world, and reſerv'd for ſo unworthy, unthankful a generation as we, even thoſe glorious priviledges, and liberties of the Goſpel, the price of the precious bloud of Chriſt; as we deal with the ſtones and rubble wherewith we mend our High-wayes; and made them to pave the way of our Luſts? O Damnable Ingratitude! O curſed unfaithfulneſs! O horrible impiety! Is this the way to provide for a day of Judgment? to conſult the comfort of a death-bed; the glory of a Church, or the Peace of a Nation? The Lord awaken us! the good Lord forgive us!

Obj. But, it may be, you have other thoughts of your ſelves: God forbid it ſhould be ſo; ſure we make an higher account of our Talents than ſo, eſpecially the ſpiritual part of them.

Anſ. What I ſay to you, I ſay to my ſelf; I would to God you could all plead Guiltleſs but I, who am

am conſcious to the guilt of this, and far more than I can expreſs. But, for your further conviction, conſider; Have you had ſuch an eſteem of your Talents as you ought? Let me ask you then, On what account, or reaſon is it, that you ſo eſteem them? Do you prize them as they are *Talents*, and the things wherein your duty and diligence, and the glory of God, is bound up? Do you eſteem your work in them, as well as your enjoyment of them? Chriſtian! Ask thy heart, in earneſt, What is it that thou deſireſt, or prizeſt, thy Time, Health, Peace, Plenty, or any other Priviledges or Enjoyments, for? Can you ſay, you prize them more for their ſervice, than for their ſweetneſs? more for Gods ſake, than for your own? The Excellency, and therefore, the deſirableneſs of theſe things, lies in their End; Now the End of theſe things is not in themſelves, but they are ordained Means unto a higher End. To prize *Health*, for it ſelf, is not to prize it aright; Theſe are the only riches that a ſpiritual heart can take true content, and delight in, that are laid out for God. The Tradeſman, that means to thrive, will turn all he can into ſtock; a penny here, is of more value with him, than a ſhilling, that muſt lie dead by him. I ſhall ſay no more but this; You may judge of your own caſe, by your faithful, and practical applying of all theſe things unto their great and high End.

5. *What hath been your care about your Talents?* Your care of them, and your care in them?

them? Han't your *Dogs* been maintain'd with the childrens bread? I mean, the unreasonable, and ravenous desires, and lusts of the Flesh; han't they liv'd upon your Parts and Gifts? nay, on the very heart and blood of your duties and profession? What care have you had of your Master's Goods, to keep them clean, and spotless, from the pollutions of your own Natures, and constitutions; and from the abomination of the Times, and Places wherein you live? O, with what a *Hiew* do they look? are they such as will credit the Owner of them? mayn't you be asham'd to see them? would any one think, that the God of Glory should be the Author of them? oh! let us sit down, with *Mary*, and wash them out in our Tears! What care have you had of them, to keep them repaired? han't you worn out your Talents, and are ready to cry for new? for *New Lights*, to do the works of *Darkness* by; for *new Discoveries*, and *new wayes*, and are weary of the *good old way*? Plain, and common truths, though never so necessary, or seasonable, are lookt upon as poor, thred-worn rags. Are they not new things, though never so notional, or circumstantial; nay, though never so dubious and dangerous; that do most affect you? Are there not many among us, that have worn out Repentance, and all Duty and Obedience, and cast them aside, for aboliſh'd Legal Rags? And Christ, *who was obedient unto Death, even the death of the Cross*, must be their *Sumpter*, to carry their *old shooes, and mouldy bread* after them.

them. O ſenſual Impietie! O helliſh Pride! O horrible ingratitude! Can thoſe *Gibeonites* think thus to deceive God? Again, What care have you had in your Talents? Have you been trading for God, and your Souls, with that warineſs and diligence, with that watchfulneſs and unweariedneſs, with that life and activity, as you have traded for, and with, the World? Have you been careful to basket up all thoſe *Fragments* at your Maſter's Table, all thoſe odd *Ends* of Time, Truths, and Experiences, that nothing be loſt? or hath not the world devour'd the main Feaſt, and the Fleſh and the Devil had the reſt? Have you dealt wiſely, and ſparingly, with thoſe that have dealt deceitfully with you? Ah, my Brethren! can you ſay it was for want of no care in you, that you fell into ſuch, or ſuch a temptation? that you miſcarried in ſuch, or ſuch a duty or deſign? Why hath God made us *to eat our bread with carefulneſs, and drink our water with aſtoniſhment, and threatned to make our Land deſolate, of all that is therein?* as he threatned *Iſrael*, *Ezek.* 12. 19. but to convince us of our ſinful careleſneſs? *I will ſend a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell careleſly in the Iſles*, Ezek. 39. 6. How little hath it troubled us, which *End* hath gon forward, ſo that our own *Ends* have been accompliſhed? how little hath the Glory of God been ſet by, when our own Concernments have ſtood in Competition with it?

6. *What hath been the Increaſe of your Talents?*

lents? What have you gained? where are the other five you have multiplied? what have you gotten by Sabbaths and Sacraments? where's that Love, that Faith, that Patience, that Humility, that Heavenly-mindedness, that Prudence, and Zeal, and Brotherly-kindness, that you have been trading with, and trading for? Where are the slain, and the spoils of your spiritual Battels? the lusts you have subdued, the temptations you have conquer'd? where are your experiences, and your songs of deliverance? Ah, my Brethren! Where are the returns of your Prayers, and the victorious Trophies of your Faith? what have you gotten from God, and for God? where's the Fruit you have so long stood in Gods Garden for? where's the smell of your Spices, and that ripe Fruit you have to present your Lord, your Beloved with, now that he is come down into his *Vineyard? Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field: let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the Vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.* And can you assure him, *The Mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruit, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my Beloved?* Cant. 7. 11, 12, 13. Can you look back, and say, This I have gotten by this weeks mercies and duties; this I have gain'd by this day's opportunities; this fruit, this blessed crop, I have to shew for this years husbandry and patience? Or, are you

not

ing in a *Round* of Duties and Mercies, ning to the ſame point ſtill? going from to Flower, and returning as empty home, as you went out? O that I could perſwade my ſelf, and you, to ſpend more ſerious hours in our *Counting-Houſe*, to retire our ſelves with God, that we might prove our ſelves entire at laſt, and wanting nothing.

Now take up your Talents, one by one, and weigh them in theſe Scales.

1. *Your Time*, What hath been your Eſteem, your Care, your Improvement, of this Talent? Suppoſe, that God were now calling you to an account for your Time; What can you ſay? Thus many years you have enjoy'd it, it may be, twenty, thirty, or forty years; divide this into dayes, and hours, and how few can you pick out, that have been faithfully employed, in the ſerious work of God, and your own Souls? how little will there redound to the comfort of your account? Was not the moſt, or a great part of your Time, ſpent in an unregenerate eſtate? Every hour of that time is loſt: and, ſince God hath open'd your eyes, how much of your time have you ſlept away, beyond what would have refreſhed Nature? How much hath the world, carnal pleaſures, needleſs viſits, unprofitable diſcourſes, and unneceſſarie recreations eaten up? That little time, that you have in any meaſure improved; with what faintneſs, inconſtancy, and luke-warm indifferencie, hath it been done? Oh, Chriſtians! Look back on the many hours you have loiter'd away, and

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ſported, and jeſted, and ſinn'd away [illegible] ready to anſwer the Juſt God for [illegible] Have you never been, even burden'd wi[illegible] time, that you have invented ſuch thin[illegible] as *Paſtimes*, to rid your hands of it? as if God had not allotted you work enough for your day: Nay, have you never begruteht him, and your own Souls, any of that time which hath been their unqueſtionable due? Have Sabbaths and Duties, hath Prayer and Faſting, never been a wearineſs to you? Let Conſcience ſpeak now, and judge uprightly between God and us. And can we think, that God hath taken this well at our hands? Are not all theſe things written on that bloody Sword that is drawn out againſt us? What Talent have we more precious than our Time? 'tis that, wherein all the reſt are wrapt up. Were the day of Grace over, all the offers of Grace, and means of Grace, and hopes of Grace, ſhould be over too. Ah! could you but hear thoſe heart-melting groans, and fruitleſs wiſhes of the Damned, for one of your idle hours; how would it affect you? and, ſhould God at laſt ſend us thither, to learn the worth of Time; how ſadly ſhould we repent it, and rue it to all eternity! Oh! methinks it ſhould ſtrike a terrour into our very ſouls, whenever we ſee the Sun ſet, to conſider, Now there is a day more gone, and I am not ſure to ſee the dawning of another; can I tell, whether God hath ſaid of me, *Thou Fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be required*; and an exact account required too?

I know

I know; I am one day older; I cannot ſay, I am one jot better, than I was this morning: but, it may be, have no ſmall cauſe to fear, that I am ſome degrees worſe. Do ſuch thoughts as theſe never lie down with you, and keep you waking, when others are aſleep? God is now come forth againſt us, with his Glaſs in one one hand, and his Sword in the other, to meaſure our Time, and to cut it off. The Glaſs runs apace; nay, ſome of the laſt ſands ſeem to be preparing for a fatal motion; and when once it is out, who knows, whether ever he will turn it up for us more? God is now reckoning with our neighbours, for their time; and, for ought we know, may call at our doors, on the very ſame Errand, before he return to his Place. Be ſure, he will ſhortly come, and make all even with you; and are your Accounts ready?

There are theſe five or ſix things eſpecially, that ſet up the rate, and price of Time.

1. *'Tis the more precious, becauſe 'tis borrowed time.* Did you never hear Conſcience crying out to you, for the loſs of your time, as the man did to *Eliſha*, for the loſs of his *Axe-head*, 1 *Kin.* 6. 5. *Alas! for it was borrowed.* The *Candle*, you loiter, and play away, is but borrowed *Light*, The Time you ſo profuſely ſpend, is but the time of your Reprival. The Sentence of Death is paſt upon us, *Rom.* 5. 12. *So death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned.* Ask a condemned man, between the Sentence and the Execution,

whether ever time were more precious with him; how vile and secure soever he was before, 'tis strange, if now he be not serious. Why, 'tis your case, Christians; you are cast by Gods Law, and condemn'd, Body and Soul, in the Court of his Supream Justice; only, here we are reprived a while, and held in this prison of the world, that we might provide for the other world, and sue out our pardon, while it may be had; 'tis meerly the Indulgence of our gracious Judge, that hath shewn this respect to our Souls, and lent us this repenting, and returning time. And, is this our case, brethren? How precious, and how dear an esteem then should we have of our borrowed Time!

2. *The Shortness of Time, adds to the Excellency of it.* The time past, was ours, but is now gone, and shall never be ours more; The time to come is none of ours, nor do we know whether ever it shall; onely the present is ours, which is but a momentany time. We live by *Moments*, the shortest division of time that is imaginable. O, Sirs! if you could but see, in what a narrow Track you are going, methinks it should amaze you; Would you not think a man in desperate hazzard, that were walking on the highest Tower, from one Pinacle to another, and had no other footing to secure himself? would you not expect to see him tumble, every moment? This is your very case, you are walking from one pinnacle of Time to another, and your graves are open underneath, to receive you; nay, are you sure that Hell lies

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not at the bottom too? Never was there one that escap't the first; few, but meet with both at once; the least trip, or step awry, nay, the least withdrawment of that hand that upholds you, may cost you as much as Bodies, and Souls, and all your hopes are worth, in a moment. Oh, the value, and consequence of one Moments time! oh, the desperate blindness, and boldness of our secure hearts! Nay, if you measure your whole time in the world, at one draught, you will find it very short. *Are not my dayes few?* sayes *Job*, chap. 10. 20. *Behold, thou hast made my dayes as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee*, Psal. 39. 5. Again, by that time you have discounted all that time you have lost, while you lay *dead in trespasses and sins*; in your *Materiâ primâ*; besides those *Deliquia animæ*, the *faintings*, and swoonings of the Soul, and intermissions of its spiritual, and regular motions, and operations; you will find, I fear, a very small pittance of time left you; for, *tam diu viximus, quàm bene viximus*; We never have liv'd longer, than we have liv'd well.

3. *The Excellency of time lies much in the uncertainty of it.* Time is a golden Chain, which is let down out of Heaven to us, but by one end, like *Jacob*'s Ladder; we are walking from step to step in it, and can see no farther than we go; the very next, for ought we know, may be the *Top-round*, which may lodge us, in an endless, if not an easeless eternity. *My times are in thy hand*, sayes *David*, *Psal.* 31. 15.

And, have we liv'd as thoſe, that can't promiſe themſelves one hour more in the world? as thoſe, that have taken their laſt, and ſolemn leaves of all the world? as thoſe that do but look for a good hour? that lie afloat on the Borders of another world, and verily expect that the next Tide ſhall ſet them on Shoar? Or, han't we been building on that which is none of our own, and preſuming on that unſeen time, that is in Gods hands? Oh, the madneſs! oh, the effaſcinated madneſs of ſuch adventurers! How is it that rational Creatures ſhould ever act ſo irrationally!

4. *Gods Patience contributes much to the glory of Time.* This is the time of his Patience: God is now bearing, and forbearing; *Sparing us, as a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him*, Mal. 3. 17. How many thouſand juſt occaſions of ruining us, bodies and ſouls, hath every day of our lives offer'd him? and yet he is content to ſhut his eyes at our infirmities, our unthankfulneſs, unfaithfulneſs, inconſtancy, and ſtubborn undutifulneſs. We are every day trying the ſtrength and length of his Patience; and thruſting a Sword into his hands, even daring him to ſtrike. Oh, what affronts have we given! and what Patience hath he ſhewn? Had we been but ſenſible of one drop of that wrath, that thoſe damned ſouls in Hell are deſpairing under; we ſhould know, that the time of Patience, is precious time indeed. Were you never ſet on the Rack of any

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tormenting pain, or distress of body, or mind? and don't you remember what thoughts you had then? Hin't you found a vast difference between sickness and health, pains and ease; though there be a great ingrediency of Mercy and Patience in all this? Surely, we shall shortly know the odds between the day of Gods Patience, and the time of his Vengeance. When once we know what Hell is, whether by our deliverance from it, or our suffering in it, we shall then better know the worth of a dayes Patience. Nay, let me say, that one day here, is of far greater consequence and moment, at least, as to our selves, than a thousand *dayes* (were there any such *Measures* of Time in Eternity) in Heaven.

5. *This is the time of our Visitation, and therefore most precious time.* Suppose all your hopes, and possibilities of salvation, should end with this day, what would your care and Account be of this day! and how very short would it seem to be? How would you watch the posting hours, and bethink the declining shadows? oh then, if you could but cry unto the Lord, and prevail with him, as once *Isaiah* did for *Hezekiah*, 2 *King.* 20. 11. that the Sun might go back some ten degrees, whilst you might work out your Salvation, and make your peace with God. Now 'tis *a little more slumber, a little more sleep*; but Then it would be, a little more time, a little more space to repent; One Sabbath more, one offer of Grace more, one tender of Christ

more, one repenting, one returning hour more, all the world then for one inch of time; Riches, Honours, Eaſe, Pleaſures, and all for a little of this precious Time. Why, Chriſtians! now is the accepted time; this is the day of Salvation; What is it that God hath been calling for, and expecting from you, all your lives hitherto? what hath been the language of every day of your time? and why hath he added this one day more, but that you might now hear, and live? *How long, ye ſimple ones, will ye love ſimplicity! Open to me, my Siſter, my Love, my Dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.-- Behold, I ſtand at the door, and knock. My Son, give me thy heart. Awake, thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light.* Hath not this been the voice that hath waited at your doors all your lives long? What hath God been doing in you, and with you, and for you, both here and in Heaven, but to prepare you for Glory, and to prepare Glory for you?

Had you a great, and a dear Friend, in a far Country, whom you had a long time longed and looked for, and now at length had received a promiſe of his ſpeedy return; if you had but a day, or ſome ſhort time, to prepare for his coming; how carefully would you improve every part of that day, or time, in all poſſible preparation? Every Servant ſhould do his part, and every thing ſhould ſtand in its place and order, for the beſt accomodation they are capable of;

and

and how little would you bethink ſuch a dayes work? what fears would there be, leſt night ſhould come on you too ſoon for your work! you would hardly have time to eat your meat amidſt ſuch Imployments; much leſs, would you ſit down, and talk, and jeſt away your time. Oh, methinks I ſee, with what life and activity, with what delightſome labour, and over-curious zeal, you are taken up in ſuch a caſe! And now, Chriſtian, hath Conſcience nothing to ſay concerning theſe things? This is your caſe; hath this been your courſe, and your care? This hath been your Preparation-day; hath this been your Preparation-work? Shall the Devil find his *Houſe empty, ſwept, and garniſht, Matth.* 12. 44. and ſhall God find a foul houſe at his return? Why! what haſt thou elſe to do in the world? what buſineſs of greater conſequence, than thine everlaſting happineſs? what care more weighty, than the care of thy Soul? And what is it thou wanteſt for the doing of this work? what direction, what ſupport, what incouragement? O be ſure, that when thy Lord cometh, he find thee *ſo doing*.

6. *It is a determined, ſet time, and therefore the more precious.* God hath meaſured thee out thy time, and thou muſt be accountable for every Minute of it. He that hath ſet bounds to the Sea, hath ſet bounds alſo to thy Time; that hitherto thou ſhalt go, and no further: He that hath numbred the hairs on thy head, hath numbred the hours, and minutes of thy dayes; he hath determined thy laſt hour,

and thy laſt breath, and thou ſhalt not paſs one ſtep beyond it. When that appointed Period is once come, the very next moment lands thee on thy endleſs eternity; there is no maſtering, corrupting, or intreating of Death; when God ſends it, it muſt perform its office and meſſage, let the work of thy Soul, or the concernments of thy Body, lie how they will: Where-ever thou art, at home, or abroad; whatever thy promiſes, or reſolutions be for the future; the hour that God hath determined, ſhall ſtand. 'Oh, with what terrour ſhould this awaken us, to lay hold on preſent time! Now, Chriſtian, tell me, haſt thou thus ſeriouſly weigh'd thy time! Queſtionleſs, theſe common *Notions* are no ſtrangers to you; this is not the firſt, nor the third, nor, it may be, the twentieth time, that you have heard the preciouſneſs of Time, thus, and more fully diſplayed. But, let me ask you, Have you been ſo thorowly acquainted with it, that I might well have ſpar'd my pains about it now? what ſolemn times have you taken, to exerciſe your moſt ſtudious, and retired thoughts about it? what an influence hath the knowledg of it had upon you? This is an every dayes Mercy, and therefore ſhould be thy every dayes Work, as it is thy every dayes Duty. Think thus of your Time oft'ner, and you will ſpend your Time better. Oh, that I could ſo rivett theſe nails, on my own and your hearts, that they might never ſtart back more; that they may live, and dye with us! O, never forget your Time! the worth of it, and your approaching ac-

account for it! Can you forget to draw your breath, or to eat your daily bread? Will a *Cripple* forget his *Crutch*, or a *Traveller* his *Pass?* As long as you have time, remember your Time; and that Time, when Time shall be no more.

This, in general. I might shew you, that there are some seasons, more especially precious than others: As,

1. *The Time of Youth.* The First-fruits are Holy, and more precious than all the Crop besides; on the account of Divine *Choice*, *Consecration*, and *Propriety*. Nay, on a *Natural*, and *Moral* account too; This is the *seasoning* of the *Vessel*, the initiating, choosing, covenanting-time. Here, ordinarily, are the foundations of eternity laid; and the first *Goale* toward another world, on which the whole *Race* after doth much depend; the time of greatest service, or dis-service.

2. *Sabbath times*, are most precious times indeed. The Day of Gods own *separation*. This is the Jewel in the Ring; though every part be precious, yet the Jewel out-values all the Ring besides. The most pure *Elixir*, if I may so speak, refined two degrees above the *Quintessence* of Time. The Authority, and the End of its Institution, together with the adjunct Priviledges of this part of Time, do highly advance the unvaluable price, and worth of it.

3. *The times of the Gospel*, are glorious, and precious times. Times of glorious Light; of glo-

Heb. 7.19. *Joh.* 1.17. *2 Pet.* 1.4. glorious Hopes; of precious Graces; of exceeding great, and precious Promiſes; nay, and Performances too. This is the Glory of the later Houſe, propheſied of by *Haggai*, chap. 2. 9. *Life and immortality is brought to light by the Goſpel*, 2 *Tim.* 1. 10. Theſe are the times ſo much looked, and longed for, of old. *Lord, now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation*, ſaid old *Simeon*, Luk. 2. 29, 30. This is the Summer, the Harveſt of the Church; one day loſt now, is of ſadder conſequence, than ſeven in the Winter of former times.

4. *Times of affliction*, are alſo eminently pretious. When the Iron is hot and malleable, then hath the Artiſt an advantage to ſhape it to his mind; The daies of the Saints greateſt Miſeries, are wont to be the daies of Gods greateſt Mercies: their moſt painful, their moſt gainful hours; both in reſpect of their ſupporting Cordials under them, and the bleſſed Ends of them. I might have enlarg'd on theſe things, but my preſent haſte and ſtraits prevent me.

Thus we have briefly examined our firſt Talent of *Time*. And, oh, Sirs! may we not dip our pens in tears of blood, and write *Tekel* on it?

2. How have you improv'd your *Parts and Gifts*? If Conſcience might but ſpeak freely here, it would make you bluſh before God.

1. Conſider, how low and mean are they, of what they might have been? *When for the time*, ſayes

ſayes the Apoſtle, for the helps, the means, the light, the high and glorious Priviledges you have enjoyed; *ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God*, Heb. 5. 12, How low is your knowledge! how weak are your reaſon and capacities! We are ſtill like children, and babes in Chriſt; like Trees, at a *ſtand*, though by the Fountain's ſide, and in the midſt of the *Paradiſe* of God; like narrow-mouth'd Bottles, that receive but by drops, and, it may be, leak it out as faſt again.

2. How little hath there been return'd to the Glory of the Donour, of what we have received! May not God ſay of us, as Chriſt, of the ten that were cleanſed? *Luk.* 17. 19. *Were there not ten cleanſed? but where are the nine?* Were there not ten Gifts beſtowed, but where are the nine? May not Conſcience anſwer, The World hath had a ſhare, and Self a ſhare, and the Fleſh a ſhare, Luſt a ſhare, and the Devil a ſhare too. Have not theſe divided the ſpoils? Tell me, Chriſtian; Where haſt thou beſtowed thy Wits moſt? thy Learning, thy Reaſon? han't the Pleaſures, the Profits, the Eſteem and Credit of the world, had more of thy ſtudy than God, and thy Soul? Is there no work for Repentance here? how doſt thou? how dareſt thou anſwer this before the great God? Art thou not ſenſible, what a damnable deal of Self-confidence, Self-attribution, and Self-ſeeking, hath crept into thy moſt ſpiritual Duties? and have theſe things never troubled thee?

thee? Have thy parts never puffe thee up with ſome bigg thoughts of thy ſelf, and an undervaluing account of thoſe that are weaker? Haſt thou never been ready to flatter, and adore thy ſelf, and pleas'd thee with the Reflections of thy own beams, and the good opinion of others concerning thee? Have you no Experiences that can comment on what I ſay, and run parallel with me here? have your dayes of private Humiliation never afforded you juſt cauſe of ſecret Lamentation? have you never been forc't to ſeek for a corner, to weep over your own prayers and tears, on this very account? han't you been ready to reſt in the bare exerciſe of Gifts, without Grace, and to miſtake Gifts for Grace? have you never had reaſon to queſtion, from the ſelfiſhneſs, or flatneſs of Duties, whether it were God, or Nature only, the ſpirit of Chriſt, or the natural, and acquired elevations of the rational Soul that acted and ſteer'd you? have you liv'd on the heart and vitals of Duty? Can you ſay with *Bernard*, *Nunquam abs te abſque te recedo*, I never go away from thee, without thee? Oh, my Brethren! can you pick up nothing here, that deſerves to be ſet among your *Corrigenda*, the ſcapes, and blemiſhes of your Duties and Lives?

Bern. Ep. 116.

3. How have you improv'd *your Graces?* Theſe are your diſtinguiſhing Talents, which difference you from all others in the World. The *Nether Springs* of Time, and Parts, and external Enjoyments, are common to the Strangers; but theſe *upper Springs* are the childrens Pri-

Priviledge. Look over your Graces now, and conſider, what care, what account, what increaſe, have you made of them? Have you *perfected holineſs in the fear of God?* 2 Cor. 7. 1.

What can you ſay of your Repentance? hath it been a *Repentance from dead works?* Heb. 6. 1. a mortifying Repentance? What's become of the ſins you have ſo often confeſſed, and complained of to God, and made as if you were ſo exceedingly wearie and aſham'd of, and troubled about? Would you willingly give God leave to ſearch every corner of your hearts and lives for them? Are there none of thoſe *Stollen Images* you have ſo conſtantly, and confidently denied, and defied, to be found in your *Tents?* None, but thoſe you have ſerved, as *Jael* ſerved *Sifera*, that lie dead at your feet! Where are the *lively* Fruits of your Repentance unto *life*, which may teſtifie for you, that it hath been in faithfulneſs, and in truth? han't your Repentances been like a *Cake* not turn'd, bak'd only on the top? or, like the Tears of the *Crocodile*, that ſeems to weep over the Prey, he inwardly rejoyceth in? Have you repented unto God, or unto men only? hath your Sorrow proceeded from the evil, and ſinfulneſs of ſin, or meerly from the danger of it? Oh, Chriſtians! as ever you expect comfort from any of your Graces, make theſe things clear to your ſelves. All your hopes of Pardon, and Juſtification, and conſequently, of all that good you expect in this World, or another, are built on the ſincerity

of

of your Repentance. What have you to do with Pardon without Repentance? I even tremble, to think of those many thousands in the world, that have made their own *Pardons*, and seal'd them with all their confidence; with what shame and horrour will their faces be appalled, when God shall tear these forged *Indulgences* out of their hands, and burn them, and their lying *Pardons*, together. Are not you some of those that defie the *Beast*, with all his Lies and Effascinations? and what! will ye turn *Popes* to your own Souls? and sell your Lusts the *Indulgences* of your own Inscription? Ah, Brethren! Remember, A bare Confession is but an external concomitant of Repentance; and a bare sorrow for sin, is but a part of Repentance. Your words, your tears, and your hopes, may all deceive you. Repentance, is a wonderful changing and transforming thing. See, how the Apostle describes it, 2 *Cor.* 7. 11. *For, behold, this self same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of your selves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge?* Oh! what a difference is there between our sorrowing for sin, and our sorrowing for the crosses and troubles of the world? how naturally do we grieve for these things! we need no Monitors here; our sorrows seldom keep within their bounds. But when we come to mourn for sin; how are we straitned! how cold and dead are we! how hard

hard muſt we wring for a tear! what a tugg have we, to rub a little life into our frozen affections! like ſtones caſt into the air, they fly no farther, than the very dead force drives them, and then make haſte to their old *Center* again. Oh, my Brethren! what can we think of ſuch forced Repentings? If we repent, as it were, againſt our Wills, will God pardon againſt his Will?

What do you think of your Faith? Is not a ſpeculative Credence, and a blind Hope, or a bottomleſs Perſwaſion, that which you call your Faith? Is it a Covenanting Faith? an obedient, and fruitful, a holy, and ſpiritualliſing Faith? Take this for a Rule. A Juſtifying, is alway a Sanctifying Faith, 1 *Joh.* 3. 3. I can but hint at things here, and propoſe you the general heads, which your own hearts, I hope, will more largely comment on. In a word, Is your Faith ſuch as is required in, and by the Word of God, *the Rule of Faith?*

Again, For your Love, and the reſt of your Graces, that reſide in the Affections; who hath, and who hath had, the greateſt ſhare here; God, or the World; Chriſt, or Self; your Duty, or your preſent Eaſe and Safety? your Humility, your Patience and Contentment; your Zeal, and Charity, and Brotherly kindneſs; Is there nothing lacking here? Theſe are the Garments you are ſhortly to meet the Bridegroom in; Are they ſuch as will become his Table, and his Spouſe? Are they not ragged, torn, and foul? Is there no waſhing-work, no mending-work here?

here! Oh, Sirs! look up: your Lord is come to visit you, and to reckon with his Family; his Harbingers are knocking at your doors; and is not the sound of their Master's feet behind them? Shall he find you in this foul, and ragged Plight? oh! that I could secretly come to every one of your hearts, and awaken them with *Martha*'s words to *Mary*, *Joh.* 11. 28. *The Master is come, and calleth for thee.* And, if you will hear, now is the time; be sure, you shall not be call'd upon much longer, in such a way as this. Your Consciences shall bear witness for me, that I have done what I can to awaken you. Oh, my Brethren! Shall God find us sleeping in such a day as this? Will he not deal with us, as that Captain did with his Souldier, whom he found asleep on the Guard? *Mortuum inveni, & mortuum reliqui.* Dead I found thee, and dead I leave thee.

4. How have you improv'd *your Duties?* Your Duties are your Priviledges, and your work is part of your wages. Is it no honour to be Servant, nay, a Noble in the Court of the most high King? Is there no difference between the service of God, which is perfect liberty, and the service of Self, and Satan, which is the highest degree of Slavery? Now, what an esteem have you had of your work? hav't you over-valued that, which is of man in it? I mean, the bodily exercise, the Modes, and Circumstances, the visible excellencies, and accomplishments of it; and undervalued that, which

which is more immediately of God? Han't you rather doted on the expreſſions and external Garbes, than admir'd and ador'd the *Spirit*, by which you have prayed or heard? Han't you been ready to attribute ſomething to your own ſtrength, and to forget the hand that leads you! And what hath been the increaſe of your Duties, both Number and Weight? Wher's that you have prayed all this while for, and heard and meditated for? Do you find that duties grow more eaſie and facil, and your hearts more ready and prompt and thorowly furniſht unto every good word and work? It may be you are grown more *Wordie* or Eloquent in Prayer or Conference, more capacious or retentive in underſtanding or memorie; thus the exerciſe of natural faculties may increaſe the habit of its natural ſtrength, though it be about ſpiritual Objects; and yet all the while it be but a carcaſe without a Soul. But can you ſay that duties are improved in the ſpirit and life of them? Don't you remember a time when you could hardly reach up your hand to turn the *Key* of Prayer, but were forc't to ſtand without and call at a diſtance, amidſt the loud *Rabble* of turbulent prophane thoughts, and cold and carnall affections? That in hearing the cloud was ſo thick upon you, that you could ſcarce conclude whether it were Night or Day with you? That in your wordly buſineſſes and all other duties of your General or Particular calling, you had much ado to keep your Eye on the Mark; much more to hit it? And

how is it with you now? Can you say that you are still getting nearer to God? That those former Distances are daily abolishing through the abundant and abounding fulness of the Grace that is given you? Are you getting ground on God, (if I may so speak) doth every step bring you nearer and every Duty wind you higher? I mean not in fine words, or Mimical gestures, or affected Singularities, but in the spirituality and flesh-abasing power of it? O'n, Sirs! Can you gather nothing from this Rod, that may mind you of something that is amiss in your Duties? Was there nothing amiss in our Preaching, and in your Hearing, and in both our Praying and other Duties, that God hath cut us so short of it now? The good Lord, if he hath any pleasure in us, fully and effectually discover these things to us?

5. *Your Company* is another Talent, that you must reckon for. O what mutual advantage might we have made of this Talent? The Merchants of the World account their Companies and Societies, their hours and places of Commerce and Exchange, one of their great priviledges. Lawyers and Physitians, when they come together will be prying into one anothers secrets and experiences, and proposing their doubts and cases depending. Nay, the very Drunkards and Whore-mongers, Brothells and Assassinates will improve one anothers Company for the carrying on of their desired, though ungodly designes, to promote the Interest

tereſt of the Devill, to ruine their Eſtates and families, and to damn their own Souls. How frequent are ſuch Complaints at the Gallows? Had it not bin for ſuch or ſuch Company, I had never come to this miſerable End. Though we may not curſe, yet how little Cauſe are we like to have, when we come to die, to bleſſe one anothers Company, and God, for that good we have done or received that way? Are we not ordinarily as vain, as worldly, as uſeleſs in our Company, as others are. Oh! whence is it that thoſe that are inſpir'd by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, ſhould yet be thus Carnal? Are we the *Lights* of the World? Is the *Candle of the Lord* in us? Joyn two or more Candles together, and will not their Flames preſently embrace, and dart up in one to a more lofty *Spire*, and with the more tranſcendent Glory? *Sure, tis our little Communion with God, that hath thus incarnated the Communion of Saints.* Are we trading together for Heaven, ingag'd in the ſame duties, and in the ſame dangers? Are our main Concernments and Buſineſſes one and the ſame? Are we all bound for the ſame Harbour, and Children of one and the ſame Father? And have we nothing to do with and for one another about it? Are there ſo many weak and feeble and dark among us, that we may fear how they will hold home! And is there no need of a helping hand? Oh how well would thy Father take it to ſee thy weaker Brother's burden on thy ſhoulders, helping him along! This is

the glorious commendation of Christ's care of us, *Isa.* 40. 11. *He shall feed his flock like a shepheard, he shall gather the Lambs with his arm, and carry them in his Bosome, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* Oh that we could resolve thus with our selves, when ever we happen (as we think we should earnestly covet) into the company of any of the Saints of God. Well! Now here is one opportunity more put into my hands of doing or receiving some good, the loss of this opportunity may lose me one jewel in my Crown. Am I travelling with him here on the Earth? Oh let me travail as many steps with him towards Heaven!

But, by the way, take with you this *Caveat*. Take heed of vain Ostentation, or empty circumstantial scruples and questions; let the matter of your discourse, and the manner of it too, be such as may administer Grace. And meddle not so much with other mens sins, as with your own duty. 'Tis to be fear'd, that we spend more time to exclaim on others sinnes than to bewail our own; to cast dirt in others faces, than to wipe off, or to weep off that which is on our own. And may not this be one Cause, why God hath suffered the *Penalty* on our comming together, even because he hath had no more glory, nor our Selves and Brethren advantage this way?

6. *Your Priviledges* are Talents you must shortly answer for. And these are either,

Tem-

Temporall, or
Spiritual.

The Temporal I might divide into Ordinary, or extraordinary. Of the Ordinary, I ſhall inſtance but in theſe three, and that briefly.

Our Health.
Our Peace.
Our Plenty.

1. *Our Health.* How miſerably have we abuſed our Health, both in its ſelf, and in its End? In its ſelf; how often have we indangered and impaired it, through its hard bondage to the World or the Fleſh. The Body indeed is your houſe to work in; but take heed of eating down your own walls. May not thy diſeaſed, ſpoiled health, thy aking limbs, and broken bones cry out on thy covetous heart, thy immoderate toyle, thy greedy mind, thy fool-hardy and audacious tempting of God, or thy intemperate life? Nay, in the recovering of decayed health; how hath God been thruſt aſide, as it were, and naturall, it may be, diabolical means onely, or eſpecially ſought unto? And as for your ends, hath it not been more to pleaſe and eaſe or ſerve the fleſh, than to diſcharge your duties towards God? Hath not your Health been made your ſlave and drudge for the World, and to hold the Candle to the uncleaneſt of your Luſts? Who hath had the honour and ſervice of your Health: Let Conſcience ſpeak the truth now; how ſeldome hath God heard from you more than in your cold and cuſtomary way, till he hath been even

forc't to take up his Rod, and make some breach upon your Health? And do we wonder then that he hath let fly the arrows of Death, or Warr and Pestilence at us!

2. *Our Peace.* How sadly may we look back and lament the Peace we have lost? When we had peace with men, we regarded not our peace with God, nor with one another. What Quarrels were we picking? What Division were we running amongst our selves? When there were none to fall out with us, we began to fall out with one another, and to smite our fellow-servants; and therefore is God justly fallen out with us. We have stript our own Peace to feather our Nests, and now, Behold we cannot sit warm in them.

3. *Our Plenty.* How fat and wanton are we grown, puft up with the conceit of our own strength? God hath filled our *Barns* and laden the Earth with his Mercies, and with the *Fool* we have been ready to say, *Soul take thine ease.* Mercies are never more foully abused, than when most freely bestowed. What hath God had of all our increase? *When thou shalt have eaten and be full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord, Deut.* 6. 11, 12. God hath found, that grosse feeding doth produce ill humours, and grosse miscarriages. *As they were increased, so they sinned against me, Hos.* 4. 7. And therefore he is fain to keep us low.

I might also mind you of your Priviledges and deliverances extraordinary. Hath God never

never reſcued you from the very brink of the grave, and reacht you his *hand* when you were juſt *ſinking*? Hath he never over-anſwered your Prayers, and gone beyond your Faith and Hopes? Have you never ſeen him ſtepping out of his common way, and as it were breaking the hedge of Nature and Reaſon to haſte to your help; that you have been forc't to ſay, *This is the Lords doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. Pſal.* 118, 23. And do you think this will be forgotten in the day account? What wonders of Providence did God work for *Iſrael*, from *Egypt* till they came into the Land of Promiſe?. But, *Our Fathers underſtood not thy wonders in Egypt, they remembred not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the Sea, even the Red-Sea. They ſoon forgot his works, they waited not for his counſells. Pſal.* 106. 7, 13. *Therefore he lifted up his hand againſt them, and overthrew them in the wilderneſs. ver.* 26. The abuſe of extraordinary Providences, whether of Merey or Judgment, on our ſelves or others for our warning, is commonly attended with extraordinary vengeance.

2. Your ſpiritual Priviledges, and theſe are either External, or Internal. External, as

1. *Our Miniſtry* is one of your Talents, which you as well as we muſt ſhortly give an account for. This ſeems to be one ſpecial voice of the Rod, and that which it chiefly aims at. This is one of the main *Bones* that God hath broken, the principal *vein* that he hath ſtruck

us in, and therefore our ſearch and attention here ſhould be the more ſerious and ſolemne. Remember now with what careleſs, cuſtomary Indifferency you have bin wont to hear; with what drowſy, dead, ſecure affections; with what unbelief, irreverence, hypocriſie; with what a divided, worldly, and wandring ſpirit; with what inconſiderate, blind zeal? Chriſtian! reaſon thus with thy ſelf; what an excellent favour is this, that I have thus long enjoyed. What way could the poor blind world have grop't out to get to Heaven by; what ſhift could we have made? Muſt not I and all the world with me, of neceſsity, have periſhed to all eternity, had it not bin for Chriſt, and the bleſſed manifeſtation of his Goſpel, the bringing in of a better Hope? for *Faith comes by hearing*, Rom. 10. 17, *And if our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that be loſt.* 2 *Cor.* 4, 3. And now what have I done? How can I anſwer for what I have received of this Talent? Thus long have I lived under ſuch a mans Miniſtry, and thus long under anothers; Beſides all thoſe occaſional advantages, which have been very frequent and precious. With what preparation? With what care? With what humility and ſelf-denyal? With what reſolution and purpoſe of heart have I ſought God and the everlaſting happineſs of my own Soul in the injoyment of ſuch Mercies? To what purpoſe hath been all my hearing and praying hitherto? Ah! What work have you here to deal plainly with your ſelves in? How might your thoughts

run

run into particulars, and every ſtone you turn afford you matter of Lamentation! I beſeech you, Brethren, for the Lord Jeſus ſake, let not your ears be both the Cradles and the Graves of theſe propoſed Conſiderations: oh, let me not open to your eyes only, and the curioſity of your ears and cenſures; and pack all up again, without any hopes of trading with your hearts! This is none of mine, but Gods errand, I am ſent in; the fruit of his tender care, and compaſſion of your ſouls. Oh, let it not return empty from whence it came! let me not carry it back in witneſs of your ungrateful refuſal! God will ſhortly come to reckon with you himſelf, he hath ſent me but a little before, as the voice of one crying in the Wilderneſs, to warn you to prepare his Way, and to make his Paths ſtrait. And, remember! Let Conſcience ſet it down, that this day you have been warned.

2. *The Sacraments* are another, and no ſmall part of your Talent. How ſhall we take the weight, and worth of this Priviledge? All the World, and a thouſand more ſuch, will never move the *Scales* againſt it. Oh, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of the love of God, in Chriſt Jeſus! How might we begin afreſh to reckon with our hearts here? Have you been ſome of Gods invited Gueſts, that have eaten, and drunk at his Table, and fed upon his Body and Blood? Conſider then,

1. What you have done. Have you fed on Chriſt, like children, at his Breaſts? or prey'd like

like *Vultures*, on his Flesh and Blood? The evidence is clear concerning the Fact; you can't deny, but that you have eaten at his Table; you have had your share, and you must expect your *Reck'ning*. 'Tis no ordinary fare you have fed upon, and you may expect that the account will be some way answerable. *Salvation* or *Damnation* will be the *summ total* of your Bill of Fare. Sacraments are chargeable *Dishes*; It cost the Great Master of these Sacred Feasts dear, his deerest, and only Son; and the Feast-holder himself his deerest Blood; And do you think to sit at these Tables, at the same rate, as at the *Ordinary* of the World? What! think you to plead your Fœderal, and Evangelical Right, by the seal of the first Sacrament, that gave you visible Title to the second? Ah, but what if this should but aggravate the business? Need I tell you, that the first admission was upon terms; and what these terms were? Were you admitted into the Family of God, and not bound to the Laws and Discipline of the Family? Know, my brethren, that there was a mutual stipulation in your first Baptismal Adoption. Surely, 'tis no small affront, for a Dog to lap of the Master's choisest dish, and at the Table of his most solemn Feast, though they belong, as Dogs, to the Family, and go in and out at the same door with the children. Oh, Sirs! there are high things, that we all stand chargeable with, on this account, and how little do we consider it?

2. How have you carried your selves in the use

uſe of Sacraments! Oh! Where are your moſt ſerious thoughts? Methinks the Rod ſpeaks louder, and plainer here, than ordinary; *For this cauſe, many are weak and ſickly, among you, and many ſleep*, 1 Cor. 11, 30. And the cauſe you may ſee, from *ver.* 17. to 22. 'Twas their abuſing, and prophaning of Sacraments. I ſhall but propoſe things in general here, and leave them to be more fully diſcuſſed between God and your own hearts. Conſider then,

1. What an influence hath your Baptiſmal Vow had upon you? how little have you ſtudied the Terms and Conditions of thoſe your firſt Indentures between God and you? and how ſeldom hath it been in your thoughts? Han't it paſt by you, as a Ceremony, rather than a Buſineſs of any great import?

2. With what ſolemn Preparation have you waited on God, in the enjoyment of the other Sacrament? Han't you ſpent more time and care about your Bodies, than about your Souls? or in the external part of Preparation, than in the life, and power, and ſpirit of it? With what ſelf-abhorrencie, with what brokenneſs of heart, with what hungring affections, with what faith, and earneſt hope, with what dear love, and ſpiritual joy, and holy watchful care, have you fitted, and filled your ſelves, for ſo near, and intimate Communion with God?

3. What good have you gotten by Sacraments? Have you been like Gyants refreſhed with wine? How have your Graces flouriſhed under

under ſuch heavenly dews? Have your reſolutions been ſtrengthned, and your diligence doubled? hath the Devil loſt ground in you? oh, what have you to ſhew that you have gotten by Sacraments? Are you not as empty, as vain, as worldly, as impatient, as ſelfiſh after, as you were before? Are theſe things like to make for the comfort of your account, at laſt? Which way can we look, but we may find guilt and ſhame meeting us? Is not every leaf in your Conſciences fill'd with accuſations againſt your ſelves? oh! with what aſtoniſhing ſhame will it amaze ſecure ſinners, when, all that Conſcience has to ſay, ſhall be publiſht in open Court, before God and Angels, and all the world! Now is the time to prevent all this; yet you have a repenting hour, a returning ſeaſon; oh! don't ſit it out, and talk, or reſolve it away, till you come to *Eſau*'s paſs, and then a whole world will never redeem you one ſuch offer more.

3. *Good Books* are another part of your Priviledge. Theſe are ſome of the golden ſtreams, that have refreſht, and made glad the City of God. How wonderfully hath the Church flouriſh't under theſe Dews? the *Pulpit* and the *Preſs* have been the two *Breaſts* of the *Spouſe*; or, as the Hands of *Sampſon*, on the Pillars of the Kingdom of Satan. 'Tis true, theſe Breaſts have been, and alwaies are, moleſted with ill humours, and give Blood, nay, ſometimes, Poyſon, inſtead of Milk. But, we have that *Glaſs* in our hands, that will diſcover where the Poyſon

ſon lies. *To the Law, and to the Teſtimony; If they ſpeak not according to this Word, it is becauſe there is no light in them*, Iſa. 8. 20. Nay, and we have the ſpirit of Promiſe, and of Truth; whoſe Office is, *to guide us into all truth*, Joh. 16. 13. This, like the Unicorn's horn, tries the *Pool*, and Antidotes it before we drink. 'Tis confeſt, that the moſt eminent Writings, of the choiſeſt Inſtruments of the Church of God, have their σφάλματα, their *Nævi*, their Spots and Blemiſhes: This argues, that they are but men, though divinely, yet not infallibly inſpir'd. The Fountain indeed is moſt pure, yet the Streams are uſeful too, though liable to accidental, and humane Tinctures and Imperfections. A Fountain without its Streams, would be ſerviceable but to few; abſtract the Sun from its diffuſed Beams, and where is its glory or ſervice? But when every one may have, as it were, a Brook, running through their Kitchins, what a help, and advantage is it, in all domeſtick employments? Surely, never was there an Age in the world, that abounded with ſuch, and ſo many helps of all ſorts, as ours have done. Now, conſider, what an Account, or Improvement, have you made of this Talent? As for the choice of your Books, and Studies, I mean, not only Scholars and Students, but others, Han't you been led by the corrupt *Genius* of a wanton Fancy, to Plays, Romances, Stories, Toys, and unprofitable Queſtions, βέβηλους καὶ γραώδεις μύθους, Prophane, and old wives Fables! or an erroneous underſtanding, and ſchiſmatical, and

par-

partial affection, led you unto the Tents of *Meſech*, the ſons of contention, to ſtrengthen your ſelves, to kindle, or quicken coals among Brethren? Have you *exercis'd your ſelves, rather unto Godlineſs*; as the Apoſtle exhorts, 1 *Tim.* 4. 7. and made your choice of ſuch Books, and means, as may beſt promote that noble, and bleſſed End? And have you improv'd ſuch your choice, with your utmoſt care in reading, underſtanding, and obeying them? It cannot but grieve my heart, to think of the miſerable ſlighting, and horrible abuſe, of this part of our Talent; to ſee poor ſouls groping, and rambling up and down in the Dark, while every corner ſtands ſo full of theſe precious Lights. When I find, of what large capacities, firm intellectuals, retentive memories, working affections, and excellent naturals, ſome men are of, and yet in all theſe degraded, through the madneſs of their hearts, that they little differ, as to their aims, objects, and leading principles, from the beaſt that periſheth. Some will pretend, they have no mony to beſtow on ſuch commodities; who yet can find, it may be, twice as much, to ſpend at one ſitting, with their fellow Drunkards, or Dealers; or in ſome Toy, to pleaſe a cocker'd child; or to cloath the back of Pride; or to ſacrifice to any of their Luſts. If the Devil, by the Commiſſion of the unclean ſpirit, lay a Tribute, as I may ſay, on thee; he ſeldom goes without it. If thy ſelf-love, thy vain-glory, or revenge, levie a ſubſidie upon thee; it preſently ſtands for a Sta-

tute

tute-Law with thee, and thou dareſt not refuſe, or delay thy obedience, though thou pinch thy ſelf, weary thy friends, and undo thy family for it; But though thy Soul lie gaſping, bleeding, and dying within thee, and the mouth of Hell ſtand open for thee, and thy Friends, that wiſh thee and thy Soul well for ever, lie hard at thee; yet here thou pleadeſt a *Corban*, and haſt nothing to ſpare, becauſe thou haſt no heart to ſpare. Others there are, that count it ſufficient, if they beſtow their mony in theſe things, though they have little time to ſpare in reading, leſs in conſidering them; as though they meant to ſet up theſe for their *Penates*, their Paper-Idols, or Houſhold-Gods; or elſe let them lie, as waſte papers, of little uſe, more than for children to play with, or to paſs away a tedious hour on a Sabbath day.

Others, again, for the pleaſantneſs of the Style, or ſome by-reſpects to the Perſon, or Subject, will ſeem to proſelyte themſelves, to ſuch, or ſuch a ones devotion. Others, more for Novelty, than for their Underſtanding, or Conſcience-ſake; tumble over one page after another, and when all is done, can ſay, they have read it, but are as wiſe as the Moths; thoſe *Helluones Librorum*, that feed upon them. Oh, how few are there, that, like Bees, extract the ſweetneſs, and ſervice of thoſe Flowers? Where are the *Combs* you have faſhion'd, and the Store, you have treaſur'd for a ſpending time? Where are the Convictions, the Reſolutions, the Affections, they have wrought on your hearts

hearts and lives? What pains, and watchings, and care, and coſt, and hazzards, have thoſe eminent ſervants of God been at; and all, as the abuſed iſſue hath proved, but to feed your fancies, and to expoſe themſelves to your cenſures, and Critical caſtigations? Queſtionleſs, there is no ſmall guilt, in the Records of Heaven, againſt us, on this account. It is not for nothing, that God hath ſet Watchers over us, and a Flaming Sword, to keep the way of this *Tree of Life.*

2. Your Internal Priviledges; the ſtirrings, and operations of the Spirit in you, this will come into account too, at laſt.

1. *Your Convictions.* How often hath the Spirit of God wreſtled with you, till you have been forced to yield? how often hath God brought you to your knees, and made you confeſs before him? and what woful ſhifts have you made, to quench the Spirit again? Han't you been like water forced againſt the ſtream, that hath broken down, and ſwollen over all the Baies, and Damms, that have ſtood before it? Don't you find, that Convictions are harder to be wrought now, than once they were? that ordinary things do leſs affect you, than they were wont to do? or are more ineffectual, and fruitleſs, than they were wont to be? And is there no matter of ſorrow, and lamentation, in all this?

2. *Your Reſolutions.* Han't theſe been like the Spider's Webb, ſpun out of your own Bowels? and have been broken, by every finger of

of temptation? Han't God been often dishonoured, and your selves deceived, by your slight, rash, and half resolutions? Are you not asham'd, to think, to how little purpose you have been so long a purposing? When are you like to be settled, in that, you have been once, and again, resolving on?

3. *Your Vowes.* Are not the Vowes of the Lord upon you? Han't you been often plighting your troth with him? May not God *sue* you, for your Faith, Love, and Obedience, upon that *Specialty* you have given him, under your own hands and seals? Now, consider, how faithful have you been, in performing your Oaths unto God? Have you walked, as those that are in special Covenant with him? What a tie hath this been upon you, against all assaults? what a stay hath it been, when your feet have been sliding? oh, my Brethren! Han't God much to lay to our charge, concerning our Vowes and Covenants? Look back on your dayes of calamitie, on your sick-beds, when you were in the bitterness and anguish of your souls; on your convictions, and desertions, when the sense of Divine wrath, and intolerable guilt lay upon you; was there nothing past between God and you then, that's worth your remembrance, and calls for tears afresh now? Surely, now that God is visiting for these things, 'tis time for us to consider.

4. *Your Comforts.* Those reviving Cordials, that have so often fetcht life into your dying hopes; with what thankfulness have you enter-

tain'd them? with what faithfulneſs have you reſerv'd, and ſtor'd them up, for ſtanding experiences, to ſupport you in future dangers, fears, or miſeries? Chriſtian, what is it that comforts thee moſt? Is it the hope of a temporal deliverance, of better times, and greater freedom and peace? Why! theſe are the things that natural, and carnal men, are wont to comfort themſelves with. *In the Lord put I my truſt*, ſayes *David*, *how ſay ye then, to my ſoul, flee as a bird to your mountain?* Pſal. 11. 1. *Remember the word unto thy ſervant, upon which thou haſt cauſed me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickned me*, Pſal. 119. 49, 50. Here are three things, which contribute to *David's* comfort in his affliction. 1. The Promiſe of the Word, the ground of his hope. 2. His relation, as ſervant, unto God, the ground of his proprietie, or right to the Promiſe. 3. The Influence of the Word, through the quickning co-operation of the Spirit. 'Tis not enough that there is a word of Promiſe made to us, unleſs the condition of the Promiſe be wrought in us, and the Spirit quicken us, to apply the Promiſe too. Comforts drawn from a Promiſe without the Condition of the Promiſe, are but ſtollen Comforts; and a Promiſe, without the Spirit, to quicken and apply it, is but like a Hony-comb in the mouth of a dead man, that hath not ſtrength to draw it.

1. Conſider, of what nature are your comforts? Are they earthly, or ſpiritual Comforts?

where

where is it you are wont to retire, and to take ſanctuarie in your fears and dangers? Are you not ready to anſwer with *David*? *In the Lord put I my truſt.* But, what's that thou findeſt in God, that comforts thee? You will ſay, His Attributes, and Promiſe: you know that he is able, and ready to help, and hath promiſed ſo to do, in a time of trouble. Yet this is not to the Queſtion. This ſhews the ground of your Comforts, but not the nature of them. You may gueſs at the nature of your comforts, by your inward fears and troubles; of what kind are theſe? Are they the concernments of God and Chriſt, and your own ſouls, or your external, and private intereſt, that you are ſo tender of? Don't the hopes of your deliverance from the Rod, affect, and rejoyce you more, than any hopes you have of being better'd by the Rod? Alas, Chriſtian! God will have thee yet more ſpiritual, he intends to wean thee from thy ſelf, and to make the concerns of his Glory, and thy own Soul, yet more precious with thee. 'Tis true, there's comfort in every good; and as *no Creature of God is to be refuſed*, 1 *Tim.* 4. 4. ſo neither the comfort that iſſues from it: but look, of what nature the Good is, of the ſame nature, in its ſelf, is the comfort that it begets. It is thy higheſt Good, that affords thy higheſt comfort. So that hence you may judge of your choice, and conſequently, of your preſent Eſtate, and future Portion, according to ſuch Eſtate.

2. Conſider, of what ground and ſufficien-

cie are thy comforts? what weight do they make againſt all thy diſcomforts? Are they ſuch as proceed from a true, and lively Faith, and the Spirit, the *Comforter*? or, are they bred on the knees of thy carnal Reaſon, and blind Hopes? The ſtrength of thy Comfort will be much according to the ſtrength of thy Faith, *Rom.* 15. 13. 1 *Pet.* 1. 8. and the fulneſs of thy Joyes, according to the fulneſs, and nearneſs of thy Communion with God, 1 *Joh.* 1. 3, 4. Thy Common Reaſon, and carnal Experience, may ſerve thee, as *Rebeccah* ſerved *Iſaac*. It may dreſs thee a ſavoury *Diſh*, ſuch as thou likeſt, and tell thee, that the Lord thy God hath brought it to thee. Baſtard Comforts may ſeem very beautiful, and *ſtollen waters, ſweet*; but theſe are waſting Comforts, Ciſterns that will not hold long; theſe Wine will quickly run on the Lees; when God begins to walk with thee, above thy reach, and to lead thee through the dark, and narrow waies of his Providence, theſe Comforts will turn *Shades* too, and tend to thy diſquietment. Therefore, my brethren, examine your Comforts; ſee whoſe Image and ſuperſcription they bear; and be ſure, that among all other things you have to comfort your ſelves with, you be not without that one, which will comfort you in Death, and ſweeten the bittereſt curſe for you.

3. Conſider, What uſe have you made of your Comforts? How have you ſet Faith and Hope on work, in your ſtraits and difficulties?

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Hath God given you this Talent, to lie idle by you? Thoſe Jewels that are of greateſt worth, are of greateſt uſe; The more there is of Priviledge in it, the more of Duty. *Bleſſed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we our ſelves are comforted of God,* 2 Cor. 1. 3, 4. Here are four things obſervable in his comforts. 1. The ground, or original of them; and that was *God, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.* 2. Their way of Conveyance: 'twas, through Jeſus Chriſt; and therefore he adds, *the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* 3. Their Sufficiencie; it was an univerſal cordial; *comfort in all tribulation.* 4. The end, or uſe of it, which was two-fold; *Private, and Publick.* 1. *Private.* It begat in him a thankful frame of heart; *Bleſſed be God, who comforteth us.* 2. *Publick.* viz. the communication of the ſame comfort to others; *That we might be able to comfort them which are in any trouble.* Now ſit down, and conſider, what's the reaſon your comforts are ſo low, and ſpiritleſs? how comes it to paſs, you are ever and anon, fainting under the yoke, and ready to give up your hopes for loſt? *Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul, and why art thou diſquieted within me?* Are the troubles of this world too hard for the hopes of the world to come? and lie heavier on you, than

Christ can bear in you? Was it *Paul's* experience only, who could say, 2 *Cor.* 1. 5. *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.* Christian! thy faint, and heavy carriage, and sad disquietments, do reflect on thy Profession, and on the glorious Attributes of God. These are your Priviledges, *Temporal*, and *Spiritual*, which is the sixth *Talent* we have had in question.

7. *Your Afflictions*, are another of your entrusted Talents. God is now reckoning with you, by his Rod; the time is coming, that he will reckon with you for his Rod. Would it not be sad, if your present miseries should but aggravate your future unhappiness. Oh! with what horrour will Conscience look back on fruitless afflictions? When thou liest stretcht out on the Threshold of a miserable eternity, thy disobedience to the Word will sufficiently astonish thee; but thy hardening under the Rod, will be one of the bitterest *Memento's* that shall sit in thy mind. When the Brute Creatures, with whose bodies and lives, thou art now gluting thy unreasonable Lusts, shall rise in Judgment against thee, who never were guilty of so stupid, stubborn, and unteachable a spirit as thou. Hath God cast thee into the fire, and art thou the same still; or rather, worse and worse? Be sure, sinner, God hath a Furnace that's seven times hotter than any thou hast ever tried yet, and that will melt thee. 'Tis one of the saddest Judgments in the world, to

come

come out of afflictions unreform'd; for this is usually, one of Gods last, and most effectual courses, to humble proud hearts. If the Rod once leave thee uncurable, there's little hope of thee. Oh! that I could awaken you now! oh! that God would awaken you! That I might but open your skirt, for one of the healing, and yet wounding Arrows, of his Spirit, to enter you; surely, he will not spend them all upon you in vain. If they will not pierce thee now, his *Quiver* is yet full of the flaming Darts of his vengeance, with which he will pursue thee into Hell, and there thou must stand his *Butt* to all eternity.

8. And lastly, *Your Relations*, are not the least part of your Talent. Here I might subdivide my Course, many waies, in this large Field: but I shall knit up all, in as few words as I can. There's never a one, but stands in several Relations to others, and every Relation charg'd full of Duty; But within the bounds of Family-Relations, I shall at present direct my way.

1. I shall begin with *Masters* of Families. Oh! how few are there, that duely consider the duties of such a Relation! How have Gods faithful servants labour'd at this *Oar*, to convince men of, and perswade them to the obedience, and practise of these duties! No string so often set as this, and yet no string so much out of tune still. How have you weighed the burden that lies upon your hands! The bloud of your servants souls, is like to lie at the doors

of your Neglects, another day. You must not think to answer God, as *Cain* answered, in another case; *Am I my brothers keeper?* God hath committed not only their bodies, but their Souls, to your care, *Exod.* 20. 10. And what have you done for them more than their bare *Indentures* or *Covenants* have inforced you? May not God justly say to thousands among us, nay, to most of us, as once to *Cain*? The voice of thy Servants blood cryeth unto me, not from the ground, but from Hell. Certainly, 'tis a dreadful thing, to consider, what cursed and heathenish cruelty there is shewn towards the souls of poor servants. Oh! what an influence might you have upon them, did you but take the right course with them? how would a little condescending, self-denying, gentleness, and love prevail with Inferiours! You are crying out upon their unfaithfulness, idleness, stubbornness and profaneness: Oh! Consider where one great cause lies. Hath not your worldliness, or frowardness, or supercilious, unchristian-like stoutness, or your own evil Example, or Negligence, and unwatchfulness in your duties, been the main thing that hath produced it? What time have you allowed them for their souls? what Counsel, what Arguments, have you used with them? what pains have you taken to inform, or reform them? how often have you been on your knees on purpose to God, for their souls? Were the *Egyptian Task-masters* ever more exact for their tales of *Brick*, than you have been with them? Do you think you are serving

of

of God, and that God will accept an offering, a duty at your hands, while your poor servants are even forced to serve the Devil, that they may serve, and please you? oh! that ever such things should be heard of, among Christians! How few are there, that, with good *Joshua*, have solemnly set up their resolutions, and faithfully walkt up to their resolutions, That they, and their houses, will serve the Lord? oh! that God would perswade us, to more seriousness, and unwearied diligence, in this business. Questionless, this is not the least cause, for which the Land is mourning this day. How can we expect, that God should remove his Judgments, before our sins be removed? that he should restore us, before he hath reform'd us? and, with what reason, can we ever hope to see a National reformation prosper, unless it be founded on a domestical, and personal reformation? I can but briefly touch at these things; onely to mind you of them, and to referr you to those that have purposely, and fully treated of Family-Government, or reformation.

Caudrey, Fam. Reform. Gouge, Domestical Dutie. Abbot, Christian Family builded by God.

2. *Parents.* Methinks, I should need no other Argument here, to provoke you to your duty, than the nearness, and dearness of such a Relation. *If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house*; [and much more then for his own children] *he hath denyed the faith, and is worse than an Infidel*, 1 Tim. 5. 8. Doth the Apostle speak only of temporal Provisions here? Nay, were it so, yet doubtless, by the same Argument, *& virtute majoris*,

majorie, the ſpiritual part is manifeſtly included; having alwayes due reſpect unto our Saviour's command, *Matth. 6. 33. But ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs.* Some there are, even among Chriſtians, that are worſe, not only than Infidels, but the very brute beaſts, that regard neither the Bodies, nor Souls of their own children. But I ſhall ſay nothing to ſuch: the very light, and principles of Nature, do ſufficiently condemn them. The greater ſort of Parents think, they have done enough, nay, very wiſely and commendably, if, through their Care, Frugality, Labour, or Wits, they have brought them up to ſome calling, or competent Eſtate, that they may live in faſhion amongſt men. Nay, ſtrange is the Ambition of ſome Parents, that care not what become of themſelves, bodies or ſouls; ſo that they may, by any means, advance their children above the rank of their Predeceſſours; that will bethink no pains, no ſweat, no travel, no diſgraces, nor repulſes, for the promotion of their ambitious aims. Might I take ſuch Parents aſide, and ask them ſeriouſly, What they mean, to heap up, with ſo much labour and diligence, the heavy curſes, and vengeance of God on their poor children? to hang Mill-ſtones about their Necks, and ſo to ſet them afloat in a leaking Veſſel? to damn their own Souls, that they may betray thoſe, they pretend ſo dearly to love? Oh, Sirs! methinks your hearts ſhould bleed within you, to think what a prepoſterous courſe you are taking, to con-

conſult the welfare of your dear children. Have they not immortal ſouls, as well as bodies, think you? Have you begotten beaſts, or Men? Is there an everlaſting eſtate, both of glory, and miſery, in the world to come? Are your children born under the condemning ſentence of the Law; and the Wrath of Almighty God? If not, then expunge thoſe Scriptures out of the Book of God, that plainly affirm it; *Matth.* 25. 46. *Rom.* 5. 12. *Eph.* 2. 3. with thoſe hundreds more, that ſpeak to the ſame thing. But, if God be true, and his Word muſt ſtand; then tell me, whether the Souls of your children be not of as great a value, and require as much of your care, as their Bodies. I cannot ſtand here, on the Inſtitutions of Family-Diſcipline; I am, at preſent, but your brief *Remembrancer*, though in a ſomewhat lax, and digreſſive way. Oh, my brethren! Are children a bleſſing to you? take heed ye be not a curſe to them. What pains and care have you taken, to inſtruct them in the knowledge and fear of God? With what wreſtlings, and tears, are you wont to go to God for them? With what gentleneſs and impartiality, have you adminiſtred due, and ſeaſonable correction? Have you begotten Slaves for the Devil, Limbs of Satan? and ſhall they be brought up in the ſame caſe they were brought forth? Oh, remember! you are but Stewards of theſe Mercies, and muſt ſhortly give up your account of them. They are God's Proprietie, and the Souls that he hath made.

3. *Hu-*

3. *Husbands.* The Apoſtle ſumms up the Husbands Duty toward the Wife, in this one word, *Love*, *Col.* 3. 19. *Eph.* 4. 25. And *ſo ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth himſelf*, ver. 28. Here are two things to be conſidered; The Object; and the Nature of this Love.

1. *The Object.* This ſhould be no Accident, nor Adjunct; but the very Perſon of the Wife; Portion, Parts, and Beauty, are indeed lovely accompliſhments; but yet are fading, and impermanent; and therefore, not the adequate Objects of the Husbands affections. Hence it is, that ſome men love their Wives, as their Merchandiſe, for their Portions ſake: Some, as their Slaves, for their Stewardſhip, Care, or Service-ſake: Others, as their Harlots, for their Beauty, and Luſts ſake. Theſe are the horrible abuſes of ſuch a Relation. He that loves his Wife, as he ought, hath his Love grounded on her Perſon, and loves her as his Wife, abſtract from all other Conſiderations, which Love alone is like to hold, as long as the Relation holds.

2. The Nature of this Love. Love is both an Active, and Paſſive affection. Here I might ſhew you, what Love hath to do, and what to bear in this caſe. But, becauſe it ſeems ſomewat alien from my preſent purpoſe, I ſhall only mention it, and ſo proceed.

1. What this Conjugal Love will do, in the behalf of the Wife. We muſt know, that the

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Object of this Love hath a double reſpect, or conſideration; both the Body, and the Soul; the Outer, and the Inner man.

1. The outer Man. Love is a benevolous, and diffuſive affection.

1. It beſtows its ſelf on its Object, and unites its ſelf with it. *And they two ſhall be one Fleſh.*

2. It delights to live with its Object. *Verus amor maximè delectatur præſentiâ amati, & quaſi cruciatur ejuſdem abſentiâ. True love greatly delights in the preſence of its beloved, and is even crucified by its abſence.* Daven. in Coloſſ. cap. 3. v. 19.

3. True love will provide for the Wife, according as her neceſſity, or degree, requires. *Amor eſt diffuſivus ſui boni.*

2. The Inner man. This is the ſpecial Care, and Charge of a Chriſtian Husband. He is therefore called the *Head of the Wife*, *Eph.* 5. 23. And ſhe required *to aſk, and to learn of her Husband, at home*, 1 Cor. 14. 35. who ſhould be able to inſtruct her. *What knoweſt thou, O Wife, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy Husband: and what knoweſt thou, O man, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy wife*, 1 Cor. 7. 16.

2. What, Love will bear with toward the Wife.

1. With all the deformities, and decaies of Nature.

2. With all humane Infirmities, Paſſions, Weakneſſes, or unkindneſſe, 1 *Pet.* 3. 7. *Giving honour unto the wife, as unto the Weaker Veſſel.*

4. *Wives.*

4. *Wives.* The ſumm of their duty, as contradiſtinct unto that of the Husbands, is, *to obey*, *Eph.* 5. 22. *Col.* 3. 18. Here's the plain Precept. Beſides, St. *Peter* pleads preſcription too, 1 *Pet.* 3. 5. *After this manner, in the old time, the holy women alſo, who truſted in God, adorned themſelves, being in ſubjection unto their own husbands. Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord.* 'Tis the excellency of a Chriſtian, to know the duties of his Relation. God hath made the Husband the *head* of the Wife, in all things, under Chriſt; And certainly, for a Wife to diſobey her Husband, in things lawful, or indifferent, is manifeſtly to rebell againſt her Maker. Εὐπειθία, ἐστὶ τῆς εὐτεκνίας μήτηρ· *Obedience, is the Mother of Felicity.* If you would live happily, live obediently. Though God hath, in his Providence, joyned thee with a Croſs Diſpoſition, yet that will not diſcharge thee of thy duty; Quò *difficilius, eò laudabilius; The more difficult, the more praiſe-worthy.* 'Tis true, the great Lord and Husband of his Church, muſt be obeyed, whatever become of the Wills, or Laws of man: But, take heed, you make not a pretence of Duty, a cloak of wickedneſs and diſobedience.

Daven. in Col.

5. *Children.* Their Duty likewiſe, is, *to obey their Parents*, *Eph.* 6. 1. 2. but here we find their duty limited. Obey, *in the Lord.* Obey them, as you may obey God too. Children have a double Parentage; a Father in Heaven, at leaſt, by Creation, as well as a Father on Earth. Now, in all Relations whatſoever,

ver, Whether it be better to obey God, or man, when one muſt neceſſarily be diſobeyed, we make no doubt. But the Inſtruction of children, at leaſt, in their minority, being the bounden, and domeſtick duty, and care of the Parents, and eſpecially of the Mother, as might appear by 1 *Tim.* 5. 10. 2 *Tim.* 1. 5. *Prov.* 31. 1. I ſhall not undertake it here, but commit it unto thoſe, whoſe more proper, and peculiar work it is. Though I doubt not, but that the obedience and duty, here required of children, to their Parents, expires not with their minority; The Relation never dies, while the Correlates live; The child is a child, as long as he hath a Parent; and the duties of his Relation, though, as to Circumſtances, may be varied, yet as to their obligation, are not at all remitted, or diminiſhed.

6. *Servants.* Their duty alſo, is, *Obedience, and faithfulneſs; not with eye-ſervice, but in ſingleneſs of heart.* (*loc. cit.*) Remember, However you may deal with your Maſters on earth, you have a Maſter in Heaven, whoſe eye is alway upon you, and obſerves your going out, and your coming in, and hath a Hell, or a Heaven, to pay your wages with. Oh! take heed of thoſe ſins eſpecially, that are moſt incident unto ſervants, and all thoſe provocations and inticements of evil Company, which are like to beget, or foment, corrupt Principles in you. How hard a matter is it, to find an *Oneſimus*! Wicked Company, is ordinarily one of the greateſt ſnares that ſervants are caught in. *My*

ſon,

ſon, if ſinners intice thee, conſent thou not, Prov. 1. 10. *&c.* Bad ſervants become bad maſters, and ſo ſin and miſery run in a ſucceſſive, and hereditary line. Thus I have finiſhed the firſt Queſtion, How have you improv'd your Talents?

2. *How have you kept your Watch?* How importunately doth Chriſt preſs this duty? *Mar.* 13. 33. *Take ye heed, watch, and pray, for ye know not when the time is.* And, *Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the Maſter of the houſe cometh*, ver. 35. And, *what I ſay unto you, I ſay unto all, Watch.* ver. 37. *watch ye, ſtand faſt in the faith, quit you like men, be ſtrong*, 1 Cor. 16. 13. *Behold, I come as a thief, bleſſed is he that watcheth*, Rev. 16. 15. Chriſtians! God hath ſet you on the *Guard*,; you are his *Watchmen*. Now there are theſe four things eſpecially requiſite in a good *watchman*.

1. A Watchman muſt be a man of *Counſel* and Judgment; able to diſcern between good and evil, Friends and Enemies. He muſt know the bounds, and extent of his Commiſſion. Watching, is the work of the eye, therefore, ſurely, blind men can never be good Watchmen. 'Tis true, there are a generation, whom the world applauds, for wiſe, underſtanding, knowing men; and theſe are Watchmen too. But *David* tells us what it is they watch for; *Pſal.* 4. 6. *who will ſhew us any good?* and the next verſe ſpecifies, what good it is they watch for; even the *encreaſe of their corn and wine*. And Chriſt

Christ himself tells us, whereto such wisdom comes at last, *Luk.* 12. 20. *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.*

Others there are, that are wise, and watchful too; but it is to do evil; *That lie in wait to deceive.* Eph. 4. 14. Others, that are wise in their Generations; but are such as *David* complains of, *Psal.* 119. 95. *The wicked have waited for me, to destroy me.* Of this sort were they that met with the *Spouse*, *Cant.* 5. 7. That watch to wound and to smite; *Whose feet run to evil, and make haste to shed innocent blood*, Isa. 59. 7. These, as wise as they are, are none of God's, but the Devil's Watchmen. Here is not only the Serpents Craft, but his Nature, his Venom, and his Curse too. But, I shall tell you, through Gods assistance, more fully, in what follows, wherein the work, and wisdom of your Christian watch lies. Only, in general, know, by the way; that your wisdom consists in the *Choice* of your work, and in the management of your Choice. And it is a supernatural wisdom, a self-denying, flesh-displeasing wisdom; it is a simple, innocent, and, in a word, a heavenly wisdom; --*which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easie to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisie.* Jam. 3. 17.

2. VVatchmen must be men of *Courage.* Alas, Christians! you know not what you may meet with on your watch; nor how you may be put to it. Men are not set to watch, but in dangerous times; *See then, that ye walk, exer-*

Cas, exactly, or warily, because the dayes are evil, πονηροὶ, difficult, dangerous, as well as sinful, *Eph.* 5. 15. VVatchmen must be resolved men. Your work is of publick concernment, and therefore you must be men of publick spirits. VVatching is night-work; *watchman, what of the night?* Isa. 21. 11. And nights are dark, and cold, and perillous. Now what are your resolutions? How are you arm'd for this Night-work? God hath already led you through the *Caput Vigiliarum*, some of the first Watches of this sad night; with what undaunted zeal have you stood your ground against all opposers, and oppositions? where are the Prizes you have taken? May you not say with the Disciples, in another case? *We have toyled all night, and have caught nothing.* You know not how you may be set upon, before ever your morning-hopes yet dawn upon you; what Storms may arise, what Providences may betide you; the darkest, and coldest time of the night, is wont to be a little before the break of day; and I greatly doubt, that the hardest work you were ever put upon, is yet behind.

3. Watchmen must be men of *Care* and Vigilance. It is not for you to sleep in such a season as this is. I am not speaking now, of that natural rest, which the weaknesses, and infirmities of Nature call for; but of that secure sluggish frame of spirit, which so blunts the edge and benumbs the operations of Grace, in the heart, and life of a Christian. *The Ark, and Israel*

Israel, and Judah, abide in tents, sayes *Uriah, my Lord Joab, and the servants of my Lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go unto mine house, to eat, and to drink,* &c. *As thou livest, & as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing,* 2 Sam. 11. 11. *The Ark and Israel, abide,* this day, *in tents.* What! can we not watch one hour? *Be sober, be vigilant, because your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lyon, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour,* 2 Pet. 5. 8. Oh! remember, while you are sleeping, he is waking, and wicked men are waking; *He deviseth mischief on his bed,* *Psal.* 36. 4. While you sit idle, they are hard at work. Nay, your Captain himself is on the Watch with you, *My Lord Joab*; your Lord *Jesus*, is encamped in the open fields: and, *He that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber, nor sleep,* Psal. 121. 4. O, my brethren: take heed of this drowsie, careless, indifferent frame of spirit; you know not how dear it may cost you. 'Twas while *men slept*, that the *enemy sowed his tares*, *Matth.* 13. 25. and while the *Virgins slept*, *the Bridegroom came*, *Matth.* 25. 5. How many thousands are there now in Hell, whom all the Calls of Mercy, nor the promises, or threatnings of the Word, nor all the fatherly stroaks of a chastising Rod, could keep waking; but were as insensible, as the earth they trod on: yet now their senses are come to them, and they feel, and know that, which shall keep them waking, and weeping too, to all eternity!

4. Watchmen must be men of *Credit*, and faithful in their trust. The duty of a Christian, is not bare work, but a trust; which is not discharged by action only, but by faithfulness and integrity. An unfaithful Watchman, is the most dangerous Enemy; no thief, like the domestick thief: oh, Sirs! Are you sensible what a charge lies on your hands? You have heard something of it already, what *Talents* God hath laid up with you; and, how dare you be unfaithful? God hath adventur'd his Glory, his Gospel, his Ordinances, his Sabbaths, nay, his very Life, as it were, in your hands; you are his chosen men, his Life-Guard, his Militant Church; and will you, dare you, through unfaithfulness, betray your Lord, into the hands of those that shall crucifie him afresh, and put him to an open shame? Let me farther propose these two Questions, for the trial of your faithfulness.

1. Have you laid out your utmost for God? The utmost of your Time, and the utmost of your Care and Strength? Have you made the most of all that you are, and have, for God? Have you redeem'd as many Hours, as many of your Thoughts, as many Pence, for God, and Christ as possibly you could have done? oh! where is Conscience now? how can it answer for yourselves? Look back on all the Mercies you have received, and all the time you have enjoyed. Is there nothing to upbraid your unfaithfulness here? Is God your record, whom ye serve in the spirit; that, for your lives, you could have

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done no more for him, than you have done? why, then! what means thy immoderate worldly care? thy miſtruſting of God, and murmuring at his Providence? what means all this coſt thou haſt beſtowed, to feed thy Pride and Ambition? or thy over-curious, or over-greedy Palate? Remember! in ſuch a Garment, in ſuch a Building, in ſuch a Banquet, in ſuch a Recreation, in ſuch a Company, in ſuch a Buſineſs, ſomething might well have been ſpar'd for Chriſt. What mean thy worldly thoughts, and thy worldly diſcourſe, on the Lords own day; whereof, not one minute is thine own? And, is this plain dealing with God? Is this thy faithfulneſs to thy friend? oh, be convinc't, and aſham'd before God!

2. Have you been impartial in your obedience? Han't you learn't of *Saul*, to reſerve ſome of the chief of the things, which ſhould have been utterly deſtroyed? May not God come, and pull an *Agag* out of your *Cloſets*? ſome *delicate*, choiſe *Luſt*, which you are loath to lay violent hands on? Have you never ſerved God with an *Amalekitiſh* ſacrifice, with unhallowed, prophane, and uncircumciſed hearts? Don't you find it harder work, to deny your ſelves in ſome things, than in others? Are not ſome duties more difficult, and irkſome to the Fleſh, than others? Watch your ſelves then, eſpecially in theſe things, and you may quickly find much of the partiality of your obedience.

Thus I have labour'd, though weakly, to ſet

you on your Guard; and have put the Watch-Bill into your hands. Now let me tell you, what you are to watch for, and what to watch againſt, and why.

1. What you are to watch for; and not only to let paſs, but to defend, and contend for; in general.

1. *Gods Glory.* Whatſoever is properly, and directly for the Glory of God, you are bound to defend with your Lives. Neither is this all, but you are to watch, apprehend, and improve all advantages, and opportunities, in order hereunto: to ſet every wheel you can move, a going this way. This is the great *Road*, the Kings high way, which you ſhould turn every wandring Paſſenger into. All your thoughts, aims, and deſigns, your Families, and whatever elſe lies within your bounds and limits ſhould be all travelling this way; for this only leads homewards: which brings me to the next.

2. *Your own Salvation.* Chriſtians, you watch for your Lives, nay, for your Souls; and what have you dearer than theſe? Sirs! methinks this ſhould ſtartle you, to conſider, that here you ſtand with your lives in your hands; oh! that I could but convince you, how deſperately you hazzard your ſouls, and peace, and comforts, by every neglect of your Watch. If you could but ſee, what black Troops of armed Enemies, have beſet you round, and every one ſtriving to ſtrike you firſt; and the leaſt able to ſtrike you dead. But, alas! we are in the

the dark, and 'tis little we ſee, more than we feel, and little we feel of what we ſuffer. What ſhall I ſay? or how ſhall I beſpeak you? For your live's ſake, for your ſoul's ſake, for Chriſt's ſake, ſtand cloſer to your *Watch*. Oh! how thick are your enemies upon you? ſee how your blood is running at your Feet! Every *idle word* wounds you, every ſinful, *vain thought*, draws blood from you. How grievouſly was *David* wounded, but with the glance of his eye? How ſadly did *Noah* and *Lot* ſuffer by a cup of Wine? and *Peter* by a carnal fear, or hope to eſcape the *Inqueſt*? oh! the ſtabbs and wounds, that every day, and hour of our heedleſs VVatch, is attended with! If your ſouls be worth any thing with you; if Heaven, and Eternal Life, be worth any thing; take heed to your VVatch.

Now, in order to theſe two great Ends, you muſt watch;

1. *For the Word of God. Bleſſed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates; waiting at the poſts of my doors*, Prov. 8. 34. *I was glad when they ſaid unto me, Let us go into the houſe of the Lord*, Pſal. 121. 1. *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you, of the common ſalvation; It was needful for me*, ſayes St. *Jude*, and, would to God, I could not juſtly ſay, it is far more needful for me, *to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye ſhould earneſtly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints*, Jude v. 3. *Search the Scriptures*. Know your Duties

obſerve your *Teſſera*, your VVatch-word. Here is your Armourie, *which is able to make the man of God perfect, and throughly furniſht unto all good works*, 2 Tim. 3. 17. Theſe are the weapons, which Chriſt, our Captain, hath already tried againſt the great *Goliah* of our Enemies, *Matth.* 4. 4, 7, 10. Three times in one chapter, he foils him with a γέγραπται, *It is written.* Let this be the *Beacon* then, that you watch at; even at the *Shepheards tents*, whither you may retreat, and be ſafe. Beyond theſe bounds, you have no warrant; if you wander hence, and miſcarry, (as ſome have done, making ſhipwrack of Faith and a good Conſcience; others, of their Peace and comforts) thank your ſelves.

2. *watch for the Spirit of God*; as the poor Cripples, at the pool of *Bethesda*, *Joh.* 5. 3. but eſpecially,

1. VVatch for the *teachings* of the Spirit. This will teach you, after another manner than we can do. VVe can but teach the ear, this the heart: *we baptize with water*, (as *John* ſaies of himſelf) *but this with Fire.* Alas: ours are but the Pictures, and dark Emblems of Comfort; but theſe are Comforts indeed. The will of God is never like to proſper in you, until this VVork-man take the *Tools* in hand. He knows how to break hard hearts, and to open blind eyes, and to prevail with ſtubborn wills, *and to teach his people to profit.*

2. VVatch for the *quickenings* of the Spirit.

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Prepare the Tinder of Conſcience, to catch at every Spark that ſhall leap upon it. What ſay you, Brethren? where are your hearts now? are you dealing with dead letters, or dead words? is there no life, nor ſpirit in them? or is God now ſtriking the *Steel* of his Word, on the *Flint* of your hearts? and are there no ſparks then glancing out on your affections? Now catch for your lives, and take fire from hence. Snatch a Coal from theſe Altars, and kindle a fire, that may keep you warm, all this night of your watch. Sure, if you ſit a cold, you may blame your ſelves; God hath allowed you fire, and fuel enough: All the ſweet *Cedars* of his Promiſes, nay, all the precious *Oyls* of his Graces, Faith, Hope, Patience, Love, &c. are free for your daily uſe, O take heed then, *Quench not the Spirit.* This may be the day, and hour, for ought you know, of the richeſt Grace and Mercy, that ever you were acquainted with, in your lives; the loſs of theſe offers and motions, may be the loſs of all. If now you let out your fire, who knows whether ever you may get it to be kindled more, till it be kindled for you in Hell.

3. Watch for all *Opportunities* of doing, or receiving good. *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, eſpecially unto them who are of the houſhold of Faith,* Gal. 6. 10. We are apt to wait opportunities of receiving, but not ſo forward to catch at all occaſions of doing good. *The man of God muſt be throughly furniſhed unto all good works;*

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not only to works of Pietie, but to works of Charitie too. Your light ſhould not ſhine inward onely, but outward alſo; not only before God, but before Men. *To do good, and communicate, forget not; for with ſuch ſacrifices God is well-pleaſed, Heb.* 13. 16. Communicate, not only of your Purſes, (though the preſent exigencies, and ſtraits of the diſtreſſed Saints plead with you alſo in this behalf) but of your Graces; not to the bodies only, but to the ſouls of your brethren. A good man is κοινὸν ἀγαθὸν, *a common good.* Ah, my brethren! are you lying in wait to do good? Are you glad of opportunities, to help, and aſſiſt the weak? to reduce the ſtrayers? to admoniſh the ſtubborn? to inſtruct the ſimple? to awaken the idle? to bind up the broken? and to relieve the poor of Chriſt's little Flock? Are you glad of every ſpare hour, that may be borrowed from your neceſſities, that you may run to your *Piſgah*, and thence, as it were, leap into the Arms and Boſom of your beloved Saviour, that you may ream your hearts with him, and fill your empty bottles there? oh! how little are Opportunities prized, or improved by us!

Thus you have heard the ſumm of what you are to watch for; In the next place, I ſhall ſhew you what you are to watch againſt.

1. Be ſure, *ſet a ſtrong and faithful watch againſt ſin.* Theſe are the *Gates* of your Enemies: that wide Sally-port, that broad way, wherein the children of darkneſs are walking.

O take heed! Set not your foot here. *Have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs: but rather reprove them*, Eph. 5. 11. Theſe are dangerous *Clives*; one wilful ſtep here may coſt you the breaking of your necks; or the breaking of your peace as long as you live. This Road lies beyond the *Line* of the Covenant; beware how you adventure this way. And for your wiſer management of this Watch;

1. Watch againſt ſin, in the *Fountain* of it. Cruſh the *cocatrice* in the ſhell. A full grown Luſt is not ſo eaſily maſter'd. If you intend to keep the gardens of your hearts clean, weed them betime. Sin is a Weed that will grow apace, both branch and root; and when once tis ſettled in you, it may find you work as long as you live, to tugg at it. This is the matter, Chriſtians, that God is even forc't to ſend in his Plough upon you, and to lay you to fallow, that he may wither the roots of old ſins. Old ſins are one high degree of incurable ſins. Have you no experiences of this nature? Have you never been wreſtling with ſtrong, and ſturdy Luſts? Have you never ſeem'd to have pluckt them up by the roots? and been ready to rejoice in your *Optatâ arenâ*, deſired, and glorious Victory? But, alas! What hath the next Spring produced? Han't the ſame weeds appeared again, which you thought you had been for ever rid of? What's the reaſon think you? Were not part of the roots left behind, which, while the nipping Winter of ſome Affliction,

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or Conviction, lasted, you hop't had been dying, never to revive more; but yet were all the while but strengthening themselves at the root, preparing for another Spring? O what sad work do we make our selves, for lack of a more faithful watch against the first appearances of evil!

2. Watch against the *Acts* of sin. Sin in the heart, grieves the Spirit, but sin in the act dishonours thy Profession. *A fool (* saies *Solomon) layeth open his folly.* Take heed of playing the fools in Religion. Remember your Conversations are of high consequence; The honour of the everlasting God, and the Crown and Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, are interessed in it. The eyes of Men and Devils are upon you, to watch, and to catch all advantages, to reproach, and blaspheme the name of God, on your account. Nay, let me tell you, the eyes of God and Angels are upon you too, watching you into every corner, into your closets, and into your callings, in your lying down, and in your rising up; in your beds, and in your fields; Every word, and every motion, nay, every thought and inclination, the very *Embryo* of our confused Imaginations are πεφανερωμένα, *opened, (or anatomized) unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do, Heb.* 4. 13. Oh, with what watchful prudence should Christians carry themselves in all places, and in all relations! Set a Porter at the doors of your lips; make a covenant with your eyes; enter into interchang'd Indentures with your hearts,

hearts; fetter up your wanton, wandring, ſelf-law'd wills and affections: ſwear every faculty, every member, and limb, in faithful Allegiance unto God, and Chriſt; and ſolemnly abjure all other Covenants, or Complyances. If you will walk aright, you muſt walk by line, and by Rule. *Your* ſins, my brethren, are like the ſons of *Anak* amongſt your enemies; Every offence of *yours*, is another Gyant, preſt for the Devils ſervice, againſt God, and your own Souls; Theſe are the *Goliah's*, they triumph and vaunt themſelves in. *O, let it not be told in Gath, nor publiſhed in the ſtreets of Askalon!*

3. Watch againſt the *Temptation:* to ſin. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*, Matth. 26. 41. Nay, is it not your daily prayer? *Lead us not into temptation.* oh! let it be your daily watch too. *My ſon, if Sinners intice thee, conſent thou not*, Prov. 1. 10. We live in an enticing world, and in enticing times: every danger is enticing us, our hopes, fears, and ſtraits, are enticing us: the ſnares of Hell are ſet for us, on every ſide, ſnares without, and ſnares within us; temptations of all kinds, and ſizes. The Devil hath ſpread his nets for every conſtitution, for every ſenſe, nay for grace, and in every eſtate, and in every dutie. If you are full; Pride, or worldlineſs, or ſenſuality, is his ſnare: if you are empty; Murmuring, impatience, diſcontent, immoderate care, or any unlawful courſe, is his ſnare. He hath a trap for every affection. If you are angry, revenge

venge is his ſnare; if you are merry, exceſs is his ſnare. Fain would I warn you of every *Rock*, and of every *Shoal* that might endanger you; of every falſe Star, and wandring light, that might poſſibly ſeduce you: of every *Bivium*, Creek, and turning, in your way. But the burden is too heavy for me: every day brings in new experiences; as Chriſt ſaies of the Father, and of himſelf, *Joh.* 5. 17. *The Father worketh hitherto, and I work*: every day producing new mercies and providences; ſo may we ſay, The Devil worketh hitherto, and his children work; every hour is in travel with new temptations, *And you hath he quickned, who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, wherein in time paſt ye walked, according to the courſe of this world, according to the Prince of the Power of the air, the ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience*, Eph. 2. 2. Therefore, what I cannot tell you poſitively, let me tell you negatively; Take heed of ſetting one foot out of that way, which you know to be the right way; of putting forth your hands unto iniquitie: whatſoever hath not the Image, and Superſcription of God, and the Seal of his Spirit upon it. Remember! *He that doubteth, is damned, if he eat*, Rom, 14, 23. To go without the light of Conſcience, is next to going againſt its light: take heed how you like that, that is not like Chriſt; or force Conſcience when it is at a ſtand. Be ſure you ſtep not beyond your clear Command, and promiſe of Protection.

4. Watch

4. Watch againſt all the *Occaſions* that may lead you into temptation. *Look not thou on the Wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup*, Pro. 23. 31. *Hating even the garment ſpotted by the Fleſh*, Jude v. 23. whatſoever hath the tincture, or ſhew of ſin upon it. *Abſtain from all appearance of evil*, ſaith the Apoſtle, 1 *Theſ.* 5. 22. Whatſoever is likely to enſnare you. Alas, Chriſtians! You know not how dearly you may ſmart for that, which in its ſelf, you may account tolerable, and indifferent. If once you venture beyond your *warrant*, you know not whither you may ramble. The waies of ſin are dark, and headlong-waies. *Her houſe is in the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death*, Prov. 7. 27. The way to Hell is down-ſtairs. Here, methinks, I would tell you, of ſeveral things, that may lead you into temptation: but I dare not enlarge my Digreſſions. Your letting down of cloſe communion with God. Your enterprizing of any buſineſs, ſpiritual, or ſecular, without asking counſel, or craving aſſiſtance of God. Every ſtep in any way, wherein your ſelves, or others, for your warning, have been formerly enſnared, &c. Theſe things, with divers others, I might have more fully dilated: but I haſten.

2. *Set a watch againſt Satan*, Learn to pay him home in his own coin. He hath ſet a ſtrait watch upon you; a watch to tempt you, and a watch to accuſe you. He goes from Dutie to Dutie, from *corner* to *corner* with you, and

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is alwaies at your right hand, to watch you; to disturb your thoughts, to quench your affections, and to pick matters of accusation. As you write what you hear, so he has his *Note-book* too, and writes, How you hear, and pray, and spend your Sabbaths and Societies; and, as far as he can gues, where your hearts, and what your ends are too. Oh! If this Conviction could but take with you, what care would it beget in you? Blessed be God, that though he watch us, yet he can't discover us; or, though he discover, yet can't discourage us: though we are his Envie, yet we are not his Prey.

3. Be sure, *Set a strong watch against Self.* Here is thy greatest Enemie; This home-bred Traitour, this betraying *Judas*, which the greater part of the world are like to rue for, to all Eternitie. O, set a faithful watch, upon unfaithful Self! These three waies you are in danger here.

1. *Of Self-application.* Beware of this. 'Tis the common course of the world, when any thing ails them, to run to Self for help. This is their *Egypt* they flie unto, which God will one day make his people asham'd of. Nay, is not God now upon this very design? what have you now to help your selves with? Han't you tried what *Egypt* can do for you? what your own Reason, and Wits can do? Where's the Deliverance that Self hath wrought you? where are your Counsels and Contrivances? are you not asham'd of your shifts, and weary

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to look any longer to these Hills? Ah! how natural is this Idolatry? How fain would this *Absalom* judge the people? How fain would Self sit in Gods throne?

2. *Of Self-relyance.* This is the Staff of that broken Reed, that will deceive you, and pierce you too. Self-dependence is a sacrilegious sin; It robs God of that Glory, which he hath said he will not give unto another. See what care God takes of this, *Judg.* 7. 2. When *Jerubbaal* was going forth against the *Midianites*; *The people that are with thee, are too many, for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, mine own hand hath saved me. Cursed is the man that trusteth in man.* And, *surely, every man in his best state, is altogether vanity.* How full is the Scripture of cautions to this purpose! oh! take heed of trusting to a lie! You never read, nor found in Scripture, nor Experience, that Salvation is of your selves; but thy Destruction is of thy self: *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self*, Hos. 13. 9.

3. *Of Self-attribution.* The ascribing of honour, or praise, to our own Prudence or forecast, to our Might or Policie, to our Righteousness, Innocence, or Duties. *Therefore they sacrifice unto their Net, and burn incense unto their Dragg; because by them*, only, as they pretend, *their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous*, Hab. 1. 16. If God answer your Prayers, and hear your cries, think not, it was your Prayers, or cries that did it, or your righ-

teousnes, or innocencie, that turn'd the wheel. See *Ezek.* 36. 25, &c. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you. A new heart also, will I give you. And I will put my spirit within you. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your Fathers. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree.* — But then, observe the *Primum mobile*, the first Mover of all this happy change, *ver.* 32. *Not for your own sakes, saith the Lord; be it known unto you. Be ashamed, and confounded, for your own ways, O house of Israel!* Though mercies and deliverances seem sometimes to be attributed unto our righteousnes, or duties, as *Prov.* 10. 2. *Psal.* 25. 21. *Matth.* 21. 22, &c. yet it is to be understood as the *Condition*, or *Instrument*; not the *Efficient*, or *Meritorious* cause of it. 'Tis the Design of the Gospel, to take us off from these *Hinges*, on which we are so naturally apt to turn. *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us*, 2 Cor. 4. 7. O take heed of maintaining that design, that God is resolved to destroy in you! if you would have the Controversie made up, which is begun, you must not expect, nor is it reason, that God should come to your terms, but you must come up to his. Until this rebellious, atheistical, designing Self, that great *Achan*, which hath troubled the Camp, be discovered, arraigned, and executed, you can expect no setled Peace.

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4. *Set a vigilant watch upon the world.* As Self is your greateſt Enemy within, ſo the World is your greateſt Enemie without. Yet know this by the way; that the World in its ſelf, is not the Enemie; but as it holds ſecret intelligence with that Enemy within. The World could do you no hurt, did not that Traitor within open the *Gates* to it. 'Tis a *Weapon* indeed, that has coſt you much blood, and many a ſad wound; but then it hit you on a bare place; it found you unarm'd, or elſe it had never enter'd. The Devil hath us'd it, and his Souldiers have tried it; and the main reaſon, why it hath prov'd ſo mortally ſucceſsful in their hands, is, for want of your Chriſtian *Panoplie*, your putting on the whole Armour of God. This would ſoon have turn'd the edge of it, and fruſtrated it's Execution. Now there are theſe five or ſix things in the world, that I would have you take ſpecial heed of.

1. Take heed of the *Fears* of the world. *The fear of man bringeth a ſnare*, Prov. 29. 25. Why, Chriſtian! Let me reaſon it a little with thee then. What is it thou ſtandeſt in ſuch fear of? the ſnares that thine enemies have laid for thee? leſt thou ſhouldſt fall into one of their pits? or incurr the diſpleaſure of thy old friends? or undo thine heir or family? Is it the Crown of Thorns that terrifies thee? or the barking of thoſe Dogs of the world at thee? believe it, and take not mine, but God's word for it, *it comes with the fear.* Your carnal fear

brings the ſnare, and tempts God to give you up to that which you ſtand in ſuch fear of. I might give you a plain, and natural experiment, to this purpoſe. Such is the weakneſs of ſome heads, that walking on a very high, and dangerous Clive, if they come but ſo near, as to look out over, and to ſee the danger; they are ſo ſurpriz'd with the ſudden fear, that they even dote on what they ſo extreamly dread, and caſt themſelves headlong, though their footing were ſure, and room to eſcape ſufficient. Similar hereunto, is that of Chriſt, *Mar.* 8. 35. *Whoſoever will ſave his life*, he that is afraid to loſe his life, *ſhall loſe it*; *but, whoſoever ſhall loſe his life, i. e.* though not *actually*, yet *habitually*, he that is not afraid, but ready to loſe it, if called thereunto, *ſhall ſave it*, in this world, or, at leaſt, in another. Now, pray ſit down, and count your gains; ſee what a Bargain, Satan, and your unbelieving hearts, are trading together for. The Devil would undertake to teach you a nearer, or a cheaper, and eaſier way to Heaven, than ever Chriſt appointed: and, if you will, you may believe him. But when you are caught in the fatal ſnares of your own carnal fears, and ſhifts; then ſit down, and thank your ſelves: and remember, who once was ſent on purpoſe, to warn you of it. And let Conſcience then, (or rather now, that it may not then) ſadly comment on *Rev.* 21. 8. *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murtherers, and whoremongers, and ſorcerers, and*

Idolaters

Idolaters and all Lyers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Here's a woful Portion, my Brethren, and wofull Partners. O, take heed of the fears of the world! Remember! Such as your fears are, such are your hopes; if your fears are the fears of the world, your hopes are the hopes of the world: your God the god of the world; and your Portion is like to be Portion of the world; O, let it appear that there is that in your Religion, that can make weight against all that Earth or Hell can find to lay in against it! *Should such a man as I flee? Et Turnum fugientem hæc terra videbit? Shall a Christian turn his back? O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their Enemies!* This base carnal fear is the Devils great Engin: the *Alpha* and *Omega* of all his external temptations: if once he can fasten these fears upon thee, he hath fitted thee for any thing: What will not a man do that is overcome with his fear! *Peter* never began to sink till he began to fear. We are never overcome till we flee; we never flee till we fear. 'Tis not the loss of life, but the loss of faith that is thy undoing loss. *Nehem.* 6. 11. *1 John.* 7. 8.

Take heed of the *Flateries* of the World. The Devill will promise thee fair, that he may gain a *Proselyte*. *All these things will I give thee*, sayes he to Christ, *if thou wilt fall down and worship me*, *Matth.* 4. 9. But alas, his Promises are farr beyond his power. He boast-

eth of that which is none of his own to bestow; or if it were, yet it is not the thousandth part of what you have already promised to you, and that by One that both can and will make it good. *Godliness hath the promise, not only of the life that now is, but of that which is to come.* 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. The Devil, or any of his illegitimate Bastard-heirs, may promise thee some small matter here, though they can make thee no assurance of it: But in the other world they have nothing to do; Never an *Advowson* nor small *Coat* there; their Lands lie not in that Country. Alas! What is there in the World, that should so tempt a Christian? Is a little yellow Clay, or one hours sensual pleasure, or the stinking breath of a few false friends; are these such taking things with the Heirs of glory? Believe it, Friends! The world flatters that it may deceive, and huggs that it may stabb and undoe you, and betray you with a kiss.

3. Beware of the *Hopes* of the world. High expectations usually beget high Fears, and according to the heighth of your fears, and the frustration of your hopes, will be the aggravation of your sorrow, and the redoubled force and *Impetus* of your Temptations. Take this for a tryed Experiment; None are so deceived by the world as those that expect most from the world. Yet however your hopes may prosper for a while; be sure, there is a worm at the root, that will eat out all in the end. The hope of the world is the hope of the wicked,

whose

whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as a Spider's web. Job. 8. 14. Your hopes, Christians, are the truest and liveliest pictures of your hearts; your carnal hopes bewray your carnal hearts.

There is nothing more natural, and yet nothing more dangerous, than to hoise the wide sails of hope in the brunt of a Storm, when the sure Anchor of a humble and recumbent faith were more proper and safe. Certainly, my Brethren, great are our losses through our groundless and carnal hopes. 'tis not a spiritual Object that will make a spiritual hope. To hope for the Redemption and Peace of Sion; The glory and enlargement of the Kingdome of Christ, and the return of the Captivity of his people: These and such like, we would fain possesse our Hopes of: And hope being once an end, seems long till it be answered; at length impatient of delaies, (*for Hope deferred maketh the heart sick*) up she climbs up into the Watch-tower, and there consults with *Reason*, expounds and applies the Promises with their own private *Glosses* and irregular *Appropriations*, prescribing or predicting Times, Places, and Methods; and all the while our personal Reformation is neglected, God provoked, and our Hopes deceived. Sure you would account it a strange unheard-of madness for a Town that is closely besieged, to throw aside their Arms, and to run together in Heaps, and begin to talk of certain old Predictions and Prophecies of Relief, though ut- Pro. 13. 12

terly uncertain, and improbable as to their present Case, till the Enemy break in, and spoyl them at their pleasure. Oh that this were not too much the temper of the spirits of these times! Nay, I would to God, there were none of those among us that *make the People vain*, when they should *have stood in Gods Counsel, and caused his people to hear his words; then they should have turned them from their evill way, and from the evil of their doings.* *Jer.* 23.16, 22. For my part, I cannot think that God hath yet done with us, or that the bitterest Ingredient is not yet behind. Surely England is not yet ripe, nor fit for the mercies she gapes after. I hope God will not leave all these spots in us, after that he hath done with us. Look for other manner of Taskes yet then ever have been imposed. These, I trust are some of the Death-pangs, the parting sprawls of the Beast, which doubtless will be strong as farr as they reach.

Obj. But you will say, Nay, but it is comfort that we want most in such times as these. *Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts,* *Prov.* 31.6.

Ans. I know, you had rather be on the *Hedg* a drying, than under the heavy *Hammers* of the *Mill* a cleansing. But God forbid that I should any way weaken your Christian confidence or Comforts, or grieve the spirits whom God would have revived. Repentance, in the Gospel-length and latitude of it, is a very hard

and

and displeasing work to flesh and blood; and a thousand slights and evasions will be had to mitigate, dissemble, or avoid it: And I fear that such kinde of Hopes may have much of this anti-evangelical influence. As long as we are unwarrantably looking that God should build us a *Bridge*, we will never be perswaded to take the *Water*, till extream force and unavoidable necessity drive us. Oh take heed you do not carnallize your Hopes! The Hopes of the world are empty hopes. Hopes and nothing else, mere Hopes. Sin hath cut off the *Entail* from the owners of them, and shame will certainly enjoy their next *Reversion*. They may goe big-bellied a while: But at last, it all miscarries: The wind they were swollen with, will turn to a whirlwind of divine wrath in the end. Though they paint and ruffle and trim it up, and boast themselves of great things: Yet, believe it, all they can do is in their Mouths, and all they are worth is on their Backs: They are broken, flattering, lying, dying, killing Hopes. Oh beware then how you perch your selves on such a *Bough*, as you are warn'd will break under you!

4. Watch against the *Scorns* of the world. Though you cannot watch to prevent them; yet watch to bear them, and not only so, but to improve them too. *Blessed are ye when men shall revile, you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsly for my sake, Matth.* 5. 11. No wonder if fools blaspheme. Alas! they *speak evil of what they know*

know not. But wisdome is justified of her children. 'Tis but a little while you are like to ly under these Scorns. You shall shortly hear them change their *Note.* When the ends of us both shall be compared together, and the definitive Sentence of a just and impartial Judg shall have convinc't them of their madness; You shall then mount above their reach, and be as much their envy, as now you are their scorn. *Come ye blessed,* and *Go ye cursed* will surely bring them to their right witts, and a more true and honourable opinion of you.

5. Watch against the *Persecutions* of the world. Here is work for your Patience, & for your Prudence too. For Patience, to suffer what you cant prevent, and for Prudence, to prevent what you may foresee and warrantably escape. Let not your Imprudence wrong your Patience, nor your Impatience force, your Prudence. Your liberties & lives are dear to Christ, as well as to your selves; you are as *the Apple of his eye, Zech.* 2. 8. Oh take heed then you do not foolishly expose the Apple of Christs eye to every *thorn* that would pierce it, as long as you may avoid it without dishonour.

'Tis true, *the Just shall live by his Faith. Heb.* 2. 4. but not abandon his Reason: he will *trust* God, but he will not *tempt him.* Though *Angels are charged concerning him, and in their hands they shall bear him up;* Yet *it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Matth.* 4. 6, 7. He that hath said. *Fear not them which kill the body:* hath also said in the same Place, *Beware of men.* And, *be wise*

Psal. 91. 11, 12.

Matth. 10. 22. *ve.* 16. *ver.* 17.

wise as Serpents. But, I hope, I need not use much ado with you here; Self-preservation is a Principle of Nature. But watch your Patience rather, how to bear that which you are called unto. And should I tell you all your encouragements hereunto; I must set open the very heart of Christ, and the Gates of Heaven to you, which is a task too hard and too high for a poor finite, shallow, mortal Creature to do.

6. Take heed of the *Cares* of the world. Those *choaking things*; *Matth.* 13. 22. *The care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choak the word.* They will choak your graces, and your comforts too. *I would have you without carefulness, 1 Cor.* 7. 32. How did Christ labour to beat his Disciples out of this! *Matth.* 6. 17. *which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his Stature?* What have you gotten by all your Immoderate cares? Han't you found them to be unsatiable, vexing, tormenting things? *Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, Joh.* 4. 13. Have your cares, ever filled your Bellies? Or are they ever like to do it? Han't you bin *as when a hungry man dreameth, and beholdeth he eateth, but he awaketh and his Soul is empty.* *Isa.* 29. 8. Besides; they are entangling things, the Cords and Fetters of the Heart, 2 *Tim.* 2. 4. Nay, let me tell thee, Christian, these sinful cares are the Instruments of Persecution and cruelty; the spears in the heart of Christ, and Thorns in thy own Soul. What Fires and Feudes do they kindle in your Affections? What shuffling and

and partiality do they introduce on your Duties? Certainly I cannot tell you the thousandth part of the mischiefs of these poysoned Arrows, these pestilent, sordid, Christ-persecuting, heart-ensnaring cares. Nor can I stand at present to enlarge as I thought to have done.

5. Lastly, *watch against Death.* Not only against the *Stroak* of Death, which is common to all; but against the *Sting* of Death. Let not Death find you out of the way of Life, nor out of a lively activity in that way. Wait *Job.* 14. 14. with Patience till your Change come, which shall change your Patience to possession Let not Death be in your Mouths only, but in your Hearts; that both heart and mouth may joyn in your eternal Triumph. This is your *last Enemy*, overcome this, and you shall wear the Crown to all eternity, and set up your everlasting Trophies in the Throne of your God. Watch, that Death find you not onely in the Vineyard, but in your work, that you may dye, not only in Christ, but in Comfort too. *Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.* *Luk.* 12. 43. Oh Christians! When God shall call you out of your hardest work, and snatch you, as it were, out of the midst of cruel storms: When he shall break in through your Prison-doors, and lead you out by the hand or send his fiery Chariots, to convey you from your glorious *Martyrdom* to your most glorious *Mansions*: Oh! conceive then, if you can, with what in effable compassions will he lap you

you up in the victorious arms of his Love, and place you in his eternal Reſt? oh! hold out Faith and Patience, one hour, one year, one Battel more; *For yet a little while, and he that ſhall come, will come, and will not tarry, Heb.* 10. 37.

Thus I have told you, what it is, you are eſpecially concern'd to watch againſt. I hope there are but few, among Chriſtians, that dare queſtion the reality, or neceſſity of ſuch a Duty. Yet to keep you the better waking, in this ſad, and diſmal night, when ſo many of our Watchmen are forſaking the Walls, or fallen aſleep: I ſhall propoſe theſe five quickning Motives.

1. They are *Enemies* that you are to Watch againſt. Such as will be ſure to do you a miſchief, if poſſible: they never intended you any good. It never goes well with *Sin*, longer than it is feeding on the blood of your Souls, and the ſpoils of your Duties. Oh, how would the *Devil* rejoice, to ſee you falling, like Starrs, from Heaven, and God blotting your Names out of the Book of Life! Nothing ſtands more directly oppoſite to your peace and happineſs, than *Self*. How full is the *World* of venom and enmity! and *Death* waits but for the word, to ſtrike his laſt blow at you, to conſummate your eternal Ruin. Oh, my Brethren! you that have to do with enemies, had need be watchful.

2. They are *Mortal Enemies*; Such as thirſt for

for your blood. *The wages of Sin is death*, *Rom.* 6. 23. What doth the Labourer look, and long for, but his wages? oh! how hard is *Sin* at its daily work, to earn the undoing *wages* of thine eternal death! 'tis that it looks,
1 *Pet.* 5. 8. and longs for. What is it the *Devil* is *seeking* after, and hunting up and down the world for, but to *devour*? What is that Impoſthume of *Self* doing within, but conſpiring thy deſtruction? How wide doth the *world* gape upon
1 *Tim.* 6. 9. thee, to *drown thee in deſtruction, and perdition*? As for *Death*, it carries mortality, and diſſolution, in the very name of it. Oh! what need have we of wary ſteps! Were ever Creatures in ſuch hazzard? Well might St. *Paul* crie out, *Wretched man, that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the Body of this death?* Rom. 7. 24.

3. They are *Spiritual Enemies*, and therefore the more dangerous. *We wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt Principalities and Powers, and againſt the Rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places*, *Eph.* 6. 12. Spiritual, on a double account; in their *nature*, and in their *operation*. They are of a ſpiritual, and inviſible nature, and are not the objects of external ſenſe, which is the eye we are wont, and able to judge by: Theſe are enemies that are alwaies on the blind ſide of us; they wound us, and we are not aware. Their operations are alſo ſpiritual; they work on us like an infectious Air; we will not believe, but that we are well

well enough, till we drop down dead where we are going; and therefore 'tis call'd the *Plague of the heart*; which is oftentimes undiſcernable, till it be incurable. How cloſely doth *Self* ſteal in betwixt Chriſt and our hearts? How deceitfully doth the *World* charm our affections? What ſecret paſſages and trap-doors, hath Satan, at every *Pore* of hearts? Oh, my Brethren! We have ſpiritual enemies to deal with; our Watch is eſpecially within our own walls.

4. They are *Conſtant Enemies*: Such as will find you work as long as you live. This comes to paſs, from their contrary, and implacable nature; Light and Darkneſs can never be reconcil'd. St. *Paul* could not ſing his *Palinody*, that his *Fight* was over, and his *Courſe* finiſhed, till *the time of his departure came*, 2 *Tim.* 4. 6, 7. Thy Watch-work, Chriſtian, is thy Life's-work. Our Enemies ſeem to enjoy our Promiſes here, *Pſal.* 37. 24. *Though he fall, he ſhall not be utterly caſt down.* Oh! which of our fallen Luſts, can we ſay, is utterly caſt down? Every Conqueſt produceth a new Combat; and our very Victories oftentimes, occaſion our ſadder Loſſes.

5. Laſtly, They are *Mighty Enemies*: Such as we cannot, in our own ſtrength, ſtand before. If a *Luſt* do but becken at us, we preſently yield. If the *World* do but frown on us, we tremble. As *Self* will have it, ſo the Law muſt ſtand. If *Satan* turn the Key of a temptation upon us, we are his Cloſe Priſoners. If *Death* once

once ſtrike, we fall. Had we not a ſtrong God to flie to; a ſure word of Promiſe; an impreghable Refuge in Chriſt; a mighty Advocate with the Father, who is able to ſave to the uttermoſt; an irreſiſtable Help in the Spirit, to bruiſe Satan under us. Were not *the Weapons of our Warfare mighty through God*, theſe *ſtrong holds* would never come down; our victories would be, according to our ſtrength, very ſmall. Therefore, what you want in Power, labour to make up in Care. O let the ſenſe of your Weakneſs, double your Watchfulneſs! that you may be able to ſay with the Apoſtle, *Phil.* 4. 13. *I can do all things*, [or ſuffer any thing] *through Chriſt, which ſtrengtheneth me.*

2 Cor. 10. 4.

Thus I have laboured, though weakly, yet, I hope faithfully, to interpret the *Rod* to you. And, oh, that now I could prevail with you to lay theſe things cloſe on your bare Conſciences! Commune with your own hearts, and let your ſpirits make diligent ſearch. Now ſet about your mourning, repenting, reſolving, reforming-work. God hath us in his Furnace, and his Jealouſie is ſmoaking againſt us. He hath caſt our Liberties, our Peace, our Health, our Hopes, nay, his own Ordinances, and Sacred Inſtitutions, the holy Veſſels of his own Houſe, as Wood under us, for the Fire of his Diſpleaſure to heat us with: oh! when ſhall we begin to melt, that we may once be capable of being caſt into a new Mould! oh! when will thoſe hard hearts break? when will thoſe ſtout

ſtout hearts yield? when will thoſe ſtubborn wills comply? Shall we ſtick in the Birth, till we die there? ſhall we tempt God on the wheel, to caſt us off, as a Lump, that will never come to any thing? Shall we even force him to throw us and Idolaters, us and Hypocrites, and the prophane, incorrigible, and abominable Scum of the earth, to the Dunghil at laſt together? The Lord forbid! O the God of Heaven forbid it!

2. In the next place, This Rod hathalſo a Voice to the Enemies of God; and theſe are either open Foes, or falſe Friends. I ſhall joyn both together, as Chriſt hath done, *Matth.* 12. 30. *He that is not with me, is againſt me; and he that gathereth not with me, ſcattereth abroad.*

Theſe five things would I tell them from God, might I be freely ſuffer'd to do my Meſſage to them: And with theſe five *Bells* I ſhall ring the doleful *Knell* of God's, and his Churches Enemies.

1. *It aſſures them, that God is not ſuch an one as they take him be. Theſe things thou haſt done, and I kept ſilence: thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch an one as thy ſelf: but I will reprove thee, and ſet them in order before thine eyes,* Pſal. 50. 21. Alas, Sinner! thou art miſtaken in God; though he keep ſilence awhile, he will not keep ſilence for ever; he will find a time to ſpeak, when thou ſhalt ſtand ſpeechleſs before him. Though his wiſe Providence, and thy curſed Projects, ſeem

to joyn issue, yet assure thy self, their disparity and incongruity, will shortly appear to thy shame and astonishment. I could tell them, in what respects they are mistaken, in their thoughts of God, [if God be ever in their thoughts.]

1. They are mistaken in his *Holiness*. This is that, which seems to be principally aimed at in the fore-cited Text. After God hath charged them with *Incorrigiblenes's*, from *ver.* 17. with *Theft, and Adultery, and False-witness*, unto *ver.* 21. Thou thoughtest, saies God, that I had been such an one too; as wicked, and as vile, as thy self: That I had lov'd thy Drunkenness, thy Oaths, thy Blasphemies, and Uncleanness, thine Idolatry, and carnal, gawdy, Will-worship, thy Cruelty, and Oppression of my People. Because I kept silence, and wink'd at these things; because ye were become *Such a Priest, and such People*, ye thought it had been, Even such God too: That I had been as great an enemy to Holiness as you; as implacably bent to ruin the Interest of my Son Christ, as you were; that I had divorced my own Spirit, and exchang'd natures with your Father the Devil, and yielded up my Scepter and Kingdom unto him, and become altogether such a one as you. You thought, it had been as much my envy, to see men faithfully labouring to make their Calling and Election sure, as it was yours: that their Faith, and Humility, and Self-denial, and Patience, and Constancy, and Resolution, and Heavenly-mindedness, had been the only things

I had been offended with, and resolv'd to revenge, with all possible Indignation, as you were. *The time cometh*, saies Christ, *that whosoever killeth you, shall think that he doth God service*, Joh. 16. 2. But, how is it possible they should ever think so? Why? *These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me*, ver. 3. It proceeds from their wilful mistake. They are not aware that our God is the *Holy one of Israel*. That is *terrible out of his holy places*. A God *glorious in holiness*. Alas, Sinner! God is never the unholier, for that he bears with thy unholiness; all these thy mistakes will shortly be corrected in another world.

Psal. 68. 35. Exod. 15. 11.

2. They are mistaken in his *Justice*,-- *I knew thee, that thou art an hard man*, saies the unfaithful servant, *Math.* 25. 24. σκληρὸς ἄνθρωπος, a shrewd, difficult man to please, *reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed*. Such are the hard thoughts of the poor, blind, prejudic'd World. They think it an impossible matter to walk by God's prescribed Rule, unto well-pleasing; that, walking by the Spirit, is but *Fancy*, or *Schism*, and therefore better let all alone. They hope, whatever they are told on the contrary, that God will pity them on their Death-beds; that his Justice will not be so inexorable, but that they may be heard, when they call upon him. Indeed, were God such a Judge, as they conceit him to be; Were he who rides the *Circuits* of Heaven, a respecter of Per-

ſons, Fallible, and Mutable, of the Generation of thoſe that ride the *Circuits* of the Earth, it might fare better with them than it is like to do. But, alas! a few daies more will open their eyes, and then they ſhall ſee what a *Juſtice* that is that dwells in Heaven. *Juſtice and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne*, Pſal. 89. 14.

3. They are miſtaken in his *Mercy*. They have heard, that he is a God of great Mercy, and thereupon are bold, that they may perſwade him to what they will, at laſt. They have heard, *that he is ready to forgive; a God, gracious and merciful, and that keepeth not anger for ever*. They believe, that his mercie is all-ſufficient, and that he will not take any great notice of thoſe things, that are ſo far beneath him; Such are the thoughts that keep their carnal hopes alive, and pleaſe their beguiled ſouls with a Fool-Paradiſe. Indeed, were God as mutable, as he is merciful, they had ſome ground for their hopes. It may be, ſome of them have laid their heads on this Pillow, *Rom.* 11. 32. *For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all*; or on *Rom.* 5. 18. *Therefore, as by the offence of one, Judgment came upon all men, unto condemnation: even ſo, by the righteouſneſs of one, the free gift came upon all men, unto Juſtification of life*: or on ſome ſuch like places: and there have dreamt of an univerſal Redemption; and by this means, all their care is over. But, they may know, when they awake, nay,

Pſal. 73. 11.

nay, to their terrour, they ſhall know, if they awake not, before they awake to Judgment; how God will have mercy upon all, and yet they left out. Abſtract the conſideration of mercy, from this preſent life, wherein all are partakers of the riches of his mercie in common, and all things happen alike, as to outward appearance, to all; and then I'le tell them, that God will have mercy, *ſupra omnes*, but not *ſupra ſingulos*: upon all ſorts, or ſome of all ſorts, Gentiles as well as Jews; but not upon every one of either; Election is but of ſome, and not of all. But I will not ſtand here, to confute ſo unreaſonable, and anti-Scriptural an aſſertion, ſeeing this *Dagon* hath been already battered to the ground, by far abler Engins than mine: The day is at hand, that will for ever decide the Controverſie, and unravel all thoſe *Querks* of the Devils knitting.

Few there are, but will confeſs, (though they are but half-convinc'd) that there is a Hell, and that it is prepar'd for ſome, whom God hath expreſly condemn'd in his Word: *Hypocrites and unbelievers*, they acknowledge, are gon in the Forlorn hope. *Some mens ſins are open before-hand, going before to Judgment.* *Hypocrites*, ſuch as their Father hath taught them to re-baptize with the *Nick-name* of *Phanaticks*, for the names are ſynonymous; and *Unbelievers*, ſuch as can't believe, as they do, and muzzle their Conſciences, as they can. Well then, Sinner, Let me reaſon with thee, from thy own Conceſſions; If Hypocrites and Un-

1 *Tim.* 5. 24.

believers are the undoubted Heirs of Hell, I will tell thee, (not to ſtand on the Juſtification of any Party) who are their Coheirs; *Matth.* 24. from ver. 48. to the end. *The evil ſervant, that ſaith in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming.* He that lives in the height of his ſecurity, that thinks 'tis time enough yet to provide for another world: *And ſhall begin to ſmite his Fellow-ſervants.* Either with the ſlanders and reproaches of the tongue, or with the fiſt of wickedneſs. *And to eat and drink with the drunken. The Lord of that ſervant ſhall come,* as ſecure as he is, *in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and ſhall cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with the Hypocrites; there ſhall be weeping, and gnaſhing of teeth.* And *Luk.* 12. 46. *He will cut him aſunder,* his Soul from his Body, and both Body and Soul from all his worldly comforts and hopes, he will irreſiſtably, and irrecoverably deſtroy him, *and appoint him his portion with unbelievers.* If the unbelieving are condemn'd, then pray ſee, who are caſt with them, and muſt partake with them in the Execution; *Rev.* 21. 8. *The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and ſorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars.* If you queſtion the truth of this, look back but to the fifth verſe, and you ſhall ſee it ſeal'd with an expreſs Authority from Heaven: *And he ſaid unto me, Write, for theſe words are true and faithful. Know ye not, that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the*

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Kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. Nay, *Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God,* 1 Cor. 15. 50. This cannot be understood literally, as if our Souls only were capable of eternal Salvation, and not our Bodies, which is contrary to the Apostles Argument; Contrary to one great Design of Christs Incarnation; nay, contrary to visible, and ocular Demonstration; For Christ himself hath visibly ascended, and, in the names, and behalf of his Mystical Members, hath entred with real *Flesh* and *Blood*, and is inheriting the eternal Kingdom of his Father: But the same Apostle particularly explains what he means by *Flesh* and *Blood*, *Gal.* 5. 19, 20, 21. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envying, Murthers, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like: as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* And now, Sinner; Canst thou wash thine hands in innocency, from all these? If thou thinkest thou art no Hypocrite, nor Unbeliever, (though both might easily be prov'd against thee) none of the *Heirs* of the Kingdom of

Darkneſs, yet art thou none of theſe *Co-heirs*? Surely, thy Converſation can never ſo fouly bely thy Condition. Alas, poor ſelf-deceived wretch! Doſt thou think to meet thy Hopes and Comforts on the other ſide of the Threſhold? I cannot but pity thee, to think how I ſhall ſee thee look, and lament thy loſs, when I ſhall meet thee at Judgment, when God ſhall make a Believer of thee, to thine everlaſting Sorrow. When thou ſhalt ſee that he was in earneſt, when he ſaid, *He that made them, will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them, will ſhew them no favour*, Iſa. 27. 11. Though he be a merciful God, yet thou ſhalt then know, that he is as juſt as he is merciful.

4. They are miſtaken in his *Patience*. They know no difference between his Patience, and his Approbation: *where is the promiſe of his coming? for ſince the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation*, 2 Pet. 3. 4. This is the Generation of Rational Brutes, that can ſee no higher, than they can reach with the Pole of Senſe and Reaſon. As long as it goes well with them in this world, they little trouble themſelves about another. The time of Gods Patience, is the time of their Preſumption. *Deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, not knowing, that the goodneſs of God leadeth thee to Repentance?* Rom. 2. 4. Ah, Sinner! If thou could'ſt, if thou would'ſt but believe, and conſider this! Is God patient with thee? and doſt thou think he will be ſo

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for ever? Is thy repentance that which his Patience is waiting for? Is God but looking one day, and one year after another, when thou wilt turn? Is he patiently waiting at thy Ale-houſe or Tavern-doors, longing for an opportunity, as it were, to find thee ſober, that he might treat with his Prodigal about his everlaſting Peace? Doth he put up and paſs by all thy ſcorns and contempt of his condeſcending Grace, and willing to forgive all if he could but perſwade thee to turn unto him? O ſhameleſs wretch! Is it conſiſtent with the glory and honour of a God thus to become himſelf; nay, thus to humble himſelf with duſt and ashes, for ever? In what fury will ſuch Patience end at laſt? oh how will thoſe *Items* burn in thy Soul, when Conſcience ſhall have the reading of them in Hell? when thoſe *Inventories* of wrath, which thou art now treaſuring up in this the time of Gods patience, ſhall be brought forth in the day of his wrath, and revelation of his righteous Judgment! o', if words would prevail, how could I let my Pen run here! But alas! Theſe Hammers can do nothing, till God ſtrike with them.

5. They are miſtaken in Gods *Delight* in, and *Care* of his people. *Haman* little thought that poor *Mordecai*, for whom he had prepared the *Gallows*, had been ſo high in the Kings *Books*. He was thinking in his heart, *To whom will the King delight to do honour more than to my ſelf? Heſt. 6. 6.* But the King's

Kings thoughts were farr otherwiſe. Methink theſe are the very thoughts and carriage of the *Human's* of our Times. Whom doth God delight to dignifie more than them? Who are advancing themſelves on the *Icarian* wings of begged honour? A few *Mordedai's* they are ailing at, who (though they deny them no civil reverence) yet know not how to ſtoop and bow and cringe to their *Idols.* Theſe are therefore *Populus Dei occidendus. A certain people,* ſayes he, *ſcattered abroad among the People in all the Provinces of thy Kingdome, and their lawes are diverſe from all people, neither keep they the Kings lawes* (a Politique pretence) *therefore it is not for the Kings profit to ſuffer them. If it pleaſe the King; let it be written that they may be deſtroyed; and I will pay ten thouſand Talents of ſilver to the hands of thoſe that have the charge of the Buſineſs, to bring it into the Kings treaſuries.* Oh præpoſterous courſe to enrich Kings! Little did he think what his deſigns lay in travail with. Oh that all thoſe that are lifting up their hands againſt their fellow-ſervants would conſider this! What if the King of Heaven ſhould call for his book of *Records,* which he hath written, *Mal.* 3.16. with what Heſter would they intercede? Our God hath ingaged *not to forget our Work and labour of love. Heb.* 6.10. *To recompenſe tribulation to them that trouble us,* 2 *Theſ.* 1.6. I intend not to tell them, all that ſpiritual refuge and divine ſtrength we have to truſt to; onely

onely let them know, that we have a righteous, Almighty, Faithful, Gracious and Wise God, and a sure word of Promise to anchor on: And we know that *Mordecai* shall one day ride in Honour and Triumph, when *Haman* shall hang on his own Gallows. I know 'tis in vain to tell the *Wolfe* now that they are the Sheep and not the Goats he is worrying. Therefore I shall leave it to the Decision of the great Day. And, sinner, let me tell thee, when God shall pull his Lambs out of thy teeth, and rake their pretious bones out of thy *Den*, thou shalt then know, to thine eternal misery, whose and what blood it is that thou art guilty of. When Christ shall up and tell thee, *In as much as ye did it, or did it not, unto one of the least of these, ye did it, or did it not, unto me.* When he shall shew thee, that every stroak lighted on the very apple of His eye: That every drop of blood thou hast drawn from them came from his heart; that every Penny thou didst unjustly exact from them, thou stolest out of his purse. That when thou didst imprison them, thou didst imprison him: O! these things will surely trouble thy minde another day. *Math* 25. 45.

6. They are mistaken in God's glorious Title of *Hearing Prayer*. *Psal.* 65. 2. *I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain, Isa* 45. 19. Let the mighty *Nimrods* of the world know then that the people of God are not so naked and helpless, as they take them to be. To speak with holy reverence, yet in Scripture-Dialect, Prayer hath the command of Heaven, *Isa.* 45. 11. *Ask me of things to come, concerning my*

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Sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. But alas! Things that are inviſible to carnal ſenſe, ſeem incredible to carnal reaſon. Yet, ſeem it never ſo incredible, what God hath promiſed and his people ever experienced, we dare, we muſt, we do believe. *The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth and delivereth them out of all their troubles, Pſal.* 34. 17. *I cryed unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy Hill. Pſal.* 3. 4. Here was his experience as a witneſs of Gods truth. *Therefore I will not be afraid of ten thouſands of people that have ſet themſelves againſt me round about. Pſal.* 3. 6. Marvail not then, ye Sonnes of Pride, that we fear none of your threatnings. Our God is a God *hearing Prayer*, and wo be to thoſe that have ſuch a God for their Enemy? The prayers of God's people were wont to be terrible to his Enemies. *Exod.* 17. 11. 2 *King.* 1. 13. In the firſt Reformation of *Scotland*, it is reported, that the Queen-Mother in her warrs confeſſed that ſhe feared more the faſting and prayer of *Knox* and his Diſciples, than an Armie of twenty thouſand men. The Prince of *Wales* being perſwaded to make warr with *Henry* the 3*d*. acknowledged that he was more afraid of his Prayers and Alms, than of his Armies. So the Biſhop of *Magdeburgs* Faſting and Prayer was the terrour of Frederick *Elector* of *Saxony*. But however it be grown leſs terrible now, it is not grown leſs fatal. God is the ſame ſtill, and his Promiſe is the ſame, and his enemies, even

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the proudeſt of them, ſhall one day know that he is a God *Hearing Prayer*. Wo be to thee, Sinner, when God ſhall rain upon thee the tears of his oppreſſed Saints, and wo to thine Houſe, when God ſhall beat upon it with the ſighs and groans of his perſecuted children? *wo to that man by whom the offence cometh.* Matth. 18. 8

7. They are miſtaken in Gods *Ends* and *Deſigns*, *Howbeit he meaneth not ſo, neither doth his heart think ſo, but it is in his heart to deſtroy and cut off nations, not a few,* Iſa. 10. 7. God's end is to reform, theirs to deſtroy. But here is our comfort; theſe are but his Executioners, and none of his Jury: God hath not acquainted them with his mind. It is not for them to know what he intends to do with his people. Their wills are none of his Rule, nor are their falſe accuſations any evidence with our Judge. God hath a hook in their Noſtrils, and hath appointed them their bounds. If the pardon come at the very top of the Ladder, the Executioner muſt obey: And if the Judge will that *the righteous ſhall be delivered out of trouble, and the wicked come in his ſtead,* his Will muſt ſtand. Pro. 11. 8.

2. The ſecond voice of the Rod unto the Enemies, is this. *It calls upon them to Conſider, and on conſideration to repent.* Methink that Generation is com, or an other well like it, which was ſpoken of under the fourth *vial*. *Rev.* 16. 9. *And men were ſcorched with great heat and blaſphemed the name of God, which hath power over theſe Plagues, and repented not to*

to give him glory. Han't the Plagues of God ſcorched us, both at home and abroad, in City and in Country; yet who hath repented to give him Glory? I have but theſe four things at preſent to propoſe to your ſober Conſideration, and very briefly.

1. What manner of Perſons are they whom God takes to be his Enemies? *Phil.* 3. 18. 19. *For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the Enemies of the Croſs of Chriſt.* Here the Apoſtle complains of Enemies: in the next verſe he deſcribes them, by their way, and by their end. Their way, *they walk*, a kind of Profeſſors they are; but, their *God is their Belly*; their Luſt and Uncleanneſs. Their *Glory is in their ſhame*: either paſſively, their Glory ſhall end in ſhame, or actively, they glory in that which is the ſhame of their profeſſion. *who mind earthly things*; Carnal men, carnal in their affections, and in their converſations: to which anſwers *Rom.* 8. 7. *The carnal mind is enmity againſt God.* And their *end is deſtruction. The end of theſe things is death. Chap.* 6. 21. Again, *Luk.* 19. 27. *But thoſe mine enemies---bring them hither, and ſlay them before me.* Here's their Doom. The Perſons were ſuch as *would not that Chriſt ſhould reign over them.* And how doth Chriſt reign, but by his word and ſpirit, and the Laws and Statutes of them? Well then, ſuch as yield not both viſible and inviſible, obedience in heart and life unto the laws of Chriſt; but

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walk by their own laws, or the laws of men in things pertaining to the Kingdom of Christ, are the Enemies of his Kingdom. Nay, every man in an unconverted estate is an enemie to Christ. *Rom.* 5. 10. *Col.* 1. 21. Now I beseech you, if your Souls, and the securing of your eternal peace, be so much worth; make a little pause here, and soberly consider, what infallible, nay, probable evidences you can produce to prove your pretended Conversion; whether they are such as God in his word speaks peace through, and on which after serious and due deliberation, you can boldly and safely adventure your souls on for ever. Nay, are there not many, and I think, never more amongst a Christian people, that even hate and disdain the imputation of Repentance and Conversion, and yet cannot so much as question whether they are the enemies of Christ or no. Well, the day is at hand that will separate the Sheep from the Goats, and then it shall fully appear who are friends, and who are foes.

2. Whether Gods Enemies be not concern'd in his Rod, as well as his friends. Doubtless the Proposition is affirmed by all the Reason in the world; If Judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel! *The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the Nations that forget God, Psal.* 9. 17. *Will a Lyon roar in the Forest when he hath no Prey? Shall a Trumpet be blown in the City, and the people not be afraid? The Lyon hath roared, who will not fear,* 1 Pet. 4. 17.

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Am. 3. 4. 6. 8. *the Lord God hath ſpoken, who can but propheſie?*

3. Whether the courſe you are taking be the way to the mercies you are exſpecting? *By ſwearing and lying and killing and ſtealing and committing adultery they break out and blood toucheth blood. Therefore ſhall the Land mourn, Hoſ.* 4. 2, 3. If all manner of prophaneneſs and oppreſsion be the way to mercy and peace, then Scripture ſhall be no longer Scripture, nor God any longer God, who hath both threatned and executed the contrary. *There is no peace, ſaith the Lord, to the wicked, Iſa.* 48. *ult. Hear this, O ye that ſwallow up the needy! even to make the poor of the Land, to fail that ye may buy the poor for ſilver, and the needy for a pair of ſhoes. Shall not the land tremble for this? and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? Am.* 8. 4, 6, 8. *Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation, but Sin is a reproach to any people, Prov.* 14. 34. Surely if the plaineſt Scripture, or the moſt undeniable experience, be of any Credit or Conſequence with us, we need no prophetical Revelations to tell us whither we are ſinking.

4. Whether or no you are fighting for Chriſt or for Antichriſt. Your eſtate is Militant, and for one of theſe two you are fighting. *He that is not with me, is againſt me.* But be ſure, *Michael* and his Angels ſhall prevail, the *Lamb* will overcome the *Beaſt*. Therefore *come out of her my People, that ye be not partakers of her Sins, and that ye receive not of her Plagues, Rev.*

Plagues, Rev. 18. 4. The *wine-preſs* is prepared, the *Vintage* is at hand; Wo! wo! wo! to *Babylon*.

3. The third Voice of the Rod to the Enemies, is this; *It tells them, that the Dregs of the Cup are like to come to their ſhare*, Pſal. 75. 8. *For in the hand of the Lord there is a Cup, and the Wine is red, it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the ſame; but the Dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth ſhall wring them out, and drink them.* How full of Gall & Wormwood is every word in this Text! *In the hand of the Lord*, This ſhews that irreſiſtable power, that ſhall enforce it, and the ſpeedy execution of it; it is in his hand, and ſhall ſhortly be ſet to their mouthes; *there is a Cup*, The meaſure which he hath appointed: 'tis the full *Doſe*, not one Scruple, or Drop, to be abated them. *And the Wine is red.* 'Tis a bloody Cup: fiery Indignation. *It is full of mixture*, A compoſition of all kinds and degrees of wrath and miſery; the Cup is not only full, but the mixture is full: it is full of mixtures, nothing left out, that may expreſs his terrour, or their torment; it is full, and compleat vengeance. *And he poureth out of the ſame*, They ſhall not ſip of it only, but ſhall take off their full draught, they ſhall be drencht with it; poured out, not by drops, but with a great *Guſh* of wrath; *But the Dregs thereof*, the Quinteſſence of its bitterneſs, the very utmoſt gall and venom of it. *All the wicked of the earth*; there ſhall not one eſcape, whether openly, or cloſely wicked; whoſoever

hath not his name written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and his doors ſprinkled with the blood of the Paſſeover: though never ſo great in the world, or righteous in his own, or in the eyes of others; all the wicked of the earth, in all times, relations, conditions, or places of the earth, *ſhall wring them out.* 'Tis a Cup of their own mingling, they are treading the Wine-preſs themſelves; and this ſhall be the *Worm* that Conſcience ſhall gnaw them with, to all eternity; that there is no more poured out, than they themſelves poured in: Their undoing, is their own doing. Ah, Sinner! Every Sin, every Lye, every Oath, every Luſt, every omiſſion of thy Dutie, every Idle word, every hour ſpent in an unconverted eſtate, laies on more weight, to ſqueeze out, and extort the bittereſt dregs of wrath and miſery, which thou muſt ſhortly drink up. Tremble then, oh Sinner! God is going the Round, with his Cup of trembling; though it come to our *Table* firſt, be ſure, the bottom ſhall return on you; *The time is come, that Judgment muſt begin at the Houſe of God, and if it firſt begin at us, what ſhall the end be of them that obey not the Goſpel?* 1 Pet. 4. 17. He that hath begun with us, ſhall ſooner or later, make an end with you. *In the day that I ſhall viſit the transgreſſions of Iſrael upon him, I will alſo viſit the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar ſhall be cut off,* Am. 3. 14. The captive *Ark*, ſhall one day prove the utter ruin of *Dagon. For, thus ſaith the Lord, Behold, they whoſe Judgment was not to drink of the*

the Cup, have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shalt altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it, Jer. 49. 12. 'Tis a sad *Omen* to God's enemies, when he begins to fall foul with his Friends. *Rejoyce, and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz, the Cup also shall pass through unto thee: thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thy self naked*, Lam. 4. 21. *Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked, and the Sinner*, Prov. 11. 31. Farr be it from me, to rejoyce at the thoughts of that Judgment that attends thee; or to comfort my self, with the hopes of that *Tribulation*, that is like to be thine eternal *Recompence*. But knowing the terrour of the Lord, we perswade men. God, who knoweth all things, knoweth, that the desire of my very Soul is, that thou might'st be saved; that, of an enemy, thou might'st be made a friend; my Prayer to God, is, that the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee; my design is not to cry out upon thee, but to cry out unto thee. *Save your selves from this untoward generation*, Act. 2. 40. I would not, that fire should come down from Heaven to consume thee; but that thou might'st be as a fire-brand pluck't out of the burning. O that, though we are struggling together here, in the womb of the earth, we might both pass safe through the new birth! Sinner! this is all the harm and misery I wish thee, and all the happiness I wish my self. O Luk. 9. 54.

that God would awaken thee, and cauſe thy lot to fall with his own people! that God would make this Cup thy bleſſing, and not thy bane; thy purge, and not thy poiſon! that he would open himſelf a door into thy Soul, before he ſhut and lock the door of Hell upon thee!

4. The fourth errand of the Rod, to Gods Enemies, is, to tell them, *That God will certainly be too hard for them. Trouble, and anguiſh ſhall make him afraid, they ſhall prevail againſt him, as a King ready to the Battel; For he ſtretcheth out his hand againſt God, and ſtrengtheneth himſelf againſt the Almighty. He runneth upon him, even upon his neck, upon the thick boſſes of his bucklers*, Job 15.24, 25, 26. O, Sinner! what ſtrange madneſs hath bewitched thee? Dareſt thou venture upon a God that's arm'd with all Power in Heaven and in Earth? *Thou ſhalt break them with a rod of iron; thou ſhalt daſh them in pieces, like a Potters Veſſel, Pſal. 2. 9.* Ah, poor worm! Doſt thou think to take God Priſoner, and bind the Almighty in chains? ſhould he arm but the leaſt of his Creatures againſt thee, with a Commiſſion to execute his wrath upon thee, could'ſt thou ſtand before him? To what a Height was proud *Herod* come, before God ſent his *Worms* upon him, *Act.* 12. 23. Hath God left himſelf without evident witneſs of his Power and Juſtice, even in this age? Don't your very Reaſon, and natural Conſcience, ſometimes ſuggeſt to you, as once it did to *Gamaliel*, *If this Counſel, or this work be of men, it will*

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come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; leſt haply ye be found, even to fight againſt God, Act. 5. 38, 39. We know, who will one day *bruiſe the Head, and wound the hairy ſcalp of ſuch an one, as goeth on in his treſpaſſes*, *Pſal.* 68. 21. And for your farther awakening, Conſider, and know,

1. That God will be too hard for your *Power*: *No weapon that is formed againſt thee, ſhall proſper: and every tongue that ſhall riſe againſt thee in Judgment, thou ſhalt condemn, this is the heritage of the ſervants of the Lord, and their righteouſneſs is of me, ſaith the Lord*, Iſa. 54. 17. He that can ſet the *Starrs* in Battel-array, and cauſe them *to fight from Heaven in their Courſes*, againſt his Enemies, *Judg.* 5. 20. He that hath *Legions of Angels* at the Command of a word, *Matth.* 26, 53. He that hath given thee all that power thou haſt, *thy life, and breath, and beeing*, *Act.* 17. 28. Will not ſuch a God be too hard for thee? Shall the dryed ſtubble contend with the whirlwind?—*who would ſet the briers and thorns againſt me in battel? I would go through them, I would burn them together*, Iſa. 27. 4. Well, Sinner! as confident, and as bold as thou art, thou ſhalt, after a few moments more, know, againſt what irreſiſtable ſtrength thou haſt ingaged; and remember, thou haſt been warn'd, that *our God is a conſuming fire*, Heb. 12. 29. Remember, when thou art crying to the Hills to cover thee; when thou art roaring under the vengeance of that God, againſt whom thou art now fight-

ing; When God is dealing dead Blows at thee, remember, that thou wert once warn'd; nay, thou ſhalt remember; there's one within thee ſhall bear record to Gods patience, and to my duty, and to thy ſhame and torment, that thou haſt been fairly warn'd. When the Plagues of a Juſt God are raining in fire and brimſtone upon thee, and there is no eſcape: when 'tis too late to deliver thy Soul; then remember the time that thou wouldſt not be perſwaded.

3. God will be too hard for your *Policy*. *Aſſociate your ſelves, O ye people, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces, and give ear, all ye of far Countries. Gird your ſelves, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces; take Counſel together, and it ſhall come to nought; ſpeak the word, and it ſhall not ſtand: for God is with us*, Iſa. 8. 9, 10. Aſſociate your ſelves, and take counſel together; let the Aſſembly be full, a general Convocation: Gird your ſelves in Oath and Intereſt, as one man, and gird your ſelves again, twiſt the Cords of Counſel, reviſe and recognize your Debates and Reſults; nay, ſpeak the word, and yet it ſhall not ſtand, for God is with us. God is an All-ſeeing, and an All-knowing, as well as an Almighty God. *Counſel is mine, and ſound wiſdom, I am underſtanding, I have ſtrength*, Prov. 8. 14. The Decrees of men are not in force with God, till they have paſt under the Broad Seal of Heaven. *Counſel is mine*, The Counſel that is not fetch'd from the God of Counſel, is Madneſs and Folly, and not Counſel. Sinner! let me tell thee, though

thou

thou haſt hired the Devil for Counſel, with the *Fees* of thy Soul: yet all thy Counſel ſhall prove thy Confuſion, when the Cauſe ſhall be pleaded before the Judge of Quick and Dead. Remember *Balaam*'s Parable, and take it for a Rule. *Surely there is no Enchantment againſt Jacob, neither is there any Divination againſt Iſrael*, Numb. 23. 23. *who hath hardened himſelf againſt God, and hath proſpered?* Job 9. 4. Ask *Cain* how he proſper'd againſt his Brother; ask the old World how they proſpered; ask *Pharaoh*; ask *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*; nay, ask the damned in Hell, whether they have proſpered? whether ever they were too hard for God? and within a few years more, you may be able to tell me, could I come to ask you, that you have had as bad ſucceſs as any of theſe.

5. The fifth and laſt Voice of the Rod, to the Enemies of God, is, *to forewarn them, that God is making ſhort work with them. For, he will finiſh the work, and cut it ſhort in righteouſneſs: becauſe a ſhort work will the Lord make upon the earth*, Rom. 9. 28. Oh, that I could be heard, while your hearing time holds! oh, that now, at the eleventh hour, I might perſwade you to come into the Lords Vineyard, and labour with us this one hour that is left, that you may receive your penny with us at night! oh, that theſe parting knocks might be heard! that theſe laſt calls might have a willing and kind Anſwer! How doth my Soul long for you? Ah, Sirs! 'twill be ſad repenting in another world; 'twill be hard to bear what you can-

not then avoid. Oh, that I could wish you, or weep you, and pray you into Covenant with Christ! A little while longer, and you will wish as I do, *O that I had been wise, while I might have been happy! oh, that I had been counselled, and rul'd by those that wisht my Soul well, even as their own Souls!* A few Sports more, Sinner, and then thou shalt play thy last Game. Deceive and flatter thy self a little longer, and then thou shalt be undeceived for ever. Scorn us, mock us, persecute us a little longer; and then thou shalt scorn us no more, thou shalt mock nor persecute no more for ever. *Be wise now therefore, O ye Kings, and be instructed ye Judges of the Earth; serve the Lord with fear, and rejoyce with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way: When his wrath is kindled but a little: Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,* Psal. 2. 10, 11, 12. The Lords wrath is kindled, and that not a little; 'tis time to kiss the Son. But, Will you kiss him, as *Judas* kiss'd his Master? Wo, wo, be to thee; it had been good for thee, if thou hadst never been born. Oh, how shall I bespeak thee! how shall I awaken thee! *what meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God.* The Cloud hangs black and heavy over thee, full of the wrath of God; Warrs and Tumults, and Rapines, abroad; Poverty and Pestilence, Murmurings, Heart-burnings, Jealousies and Fears, at home. Misery and Ruin seem to be driving at us, as *Jehu* towards *Jezreel.* Who knows what Desolations a year or two more may

But for my People, and Country's sake, I only wish, I might err in this part of Vision.

may produce? who can well what a day may bring forth: The fire hath entred your dwellings, and will you burn in your Beds? God hath clasht the *Bells* of Nature, nay, and overturn'd the *Bells* of *Aaron* too, and can none of these things affect us? oh that God would now drive home and fasten these Nails upon you! that he would graciously perswade you to hear the Rod, and him who hath appointed it.

Proceed we now to answer one Query briefly; How to Judge of the particular Voice of this or that particular Rod. And that I may commend the practice of this Search to you, give me leave to premite these three or four *Incentives*.

1. *'Tis an excellent way to gain by the Rod.* Though the *Balm* be never so Soveraign and good; yet if the Patient knowes not how or where to apply it, it is never like to effect the cure. Correction without instruction is the way to harden, not to reform. This seems to be one main cause why God was even weary of smiting *Israel*. There was no end in it; *ye will revolt more and more*. The more I strike, the more ye revolt; I may strike you dead, and all will be one. The reason is, *Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider, Isa.* 1. 3. Therefore *Doctrine* must go with *Reproof*, and *Instruction in righteousness* with *correction*; then both the Word, and the Rod will be *profitable* and successful Christian: this is the way to turn thy saddest losses to thy best advantage: To extract *Ex vipera theriacum*, out of poyson an Antidote against poyson: To turn *Egyptians* against

2 Tim. 3. 16.

E-

Egyptians; this is the art and happineſs of a Chriſtian, To ſet his loſſes, his hazzards, his croſſes, his miſeries, nay, death it ſelf, among his richeſt gains.

2. *'Tis a notable courſe to make the yoak eaſie.* What's that makes any caſe grievous or deſperate, but this, when we know not how to help it? How doth it trouble and diſquiet you, when a friend is angry, and you know not why or wherefore? or how to goabout to reconcile him? Onely this you know, that he will not be angry without great and juſt cauſe. The knowledge of the Cauſe is alway the firſt direct ſtep to the Cure. You will never go cheerfully under the yoak, as long as you go in the dark as to the end and meaning of it.

3. *'Tis a ſpecial means to improve your Experience, and to ſtrengthen your watch.* This will bring thee better acquainted with all the falſe corners and *Caves*, the windings and *Meanders* of thy heart and life. When you have not only bin taught or threatned, but whipt out of an errour, it will be a good token with you as long as you live. What you have once ſenſibly ſmarted for, you will the more carefully watch againſt. The reaſon why we are at ſuch loſſes in thoſe Circumſtantials, wherein the Word is ſilent, is, becauſe we have not obſerved nor underſtood the Rule, wherein the Rod hath ſpoken more plainly. The Rod is the *Feſtu* in Gods hand, whereby ſometimes he teacheth his children to ſpell his word. The *Theorie* of any art is not ſo throughly underſtood, till the *Practice*

ſtice make it familiar. Your Coſtly experiences will be your ſtanding experiences. Oh what a ſtaff will this be in your hands, when you are ſtaggering and halting between Faith and Reaſon! when conſcience ſhall ſtand up and urge you with former experiences, This way I dare not adventure on, God hath met with me here already, and convinc'd me that it is out of my way; the laſt time I was wandring in this or the like unwarrantable path, I ſadly remember what frowns were given me, and how dear it coſt me; and ſhould I be found in the ſame or the like way again, will he not make me remember it as long as I live? and leave ſuch a mark on me as ſhall cauſe me to go limping and lamenting to my grave?

4. *'Tis the only way to have the affliction remov'd with advantage.* Suppoſe, now God is afflicting thee in thy Health, or Liberty, or in thy worldly Deſignes or Hopes: It's not thy ordinary courſe in ſuch a caſe, to find out and remove the immediate and natural cauſe of it? if this be accompliſhed, and the effect, which troubled thee, ceaſe, thou rejoyceſt and commendeſt thy courſe, and by and by all is forgotten; the wound is cur'd, and all is well, and the Plaiſter laid up for the next like occaſion: thus the Rod loſeth its end, and doth but ſtop thee in thy way, not turn thee out of thy way: and hence it follows, that if God intend thee any good, he muſt ſend ſtronger meſſengers after thee, which, it may be, are forc't to knock thee down before thou wilt yield. But ſuppoſe that

God

God ſhould leave thee to thy own courſe, to remove natural evils with natural Remedies, and to look no higher; unto what a diſtance from God wouldſt thou in a ſhort time wander? Nay, though thou acknowledgeſt thy ſin in the general, or in many principal or particular branches of it, and indeavoureſt to humble thy ſoul in truth before God; yet if that *Achan* the chief Author of the preſent diſpleaſure be not found out and executed according to the law of God, thou art as lyable ſtill, to the ſame miſcarriage, and to the ſame affliction, as ever thou wert before. Though the Rod may have wrought ſome good on thee, yet it hath not reacht that good.

Let this ſerve to move you unto the Duty, through the bleſsing of him that watereth the Furrows of Sion, and cauſeth his people to profit. I come now to anſwer unto this great and neceſſarie Query.

To be peremptory or poſitive in this caſe is dangerous. Gods waies are ſometimes in the dark: *his counſels are a great deep*, where it may be as unſafe for us to ſeek him, as it is impoſſible to find him. Yet I am not leading you into a *Labyrinth* of endleſs or fruitleſs labour, nor introducing unto the contemplation of a *Platonick Idea*, nor about to perſwade you to turn *Oracles* to your ſelves. That which I have to propoſe is not intended to diſtract thee, but to direct thee. Here is certainly a Pearl of great price hid; a Gemme of infinite value; Digg, and thou ſhalt find it; find it, and it ſhall enrich thee both in this world, and in a better.

And

And as you hope to understand the Counsel of God in this business, set your selves with all possible seriousness and impartiality to seek it of God in the diligent use of these, and any other Directions that shall from God be suggested to thee.

1. *Consider what were thy last miscarriages.* Deal with thy self as Physitians are wont to do with their Patients. *What was the last diet you fed upon?* Possibly, there may be something in the Nature, the Quality or quantity of it, which may produce such a distemper. Was there no distaste or dislike in the stomack at, or immediately after, the reception of it? No Reluctance or doubting in conscience about any thing you have lately done, or spoken, or purposed, or advised, or omitted? Sometimes, God is pleased to intimate his displeasure by his Rod in the first step of our departure from him, He that hath commanded us to call upon him while he is near, is sometimes pleased to observe his own Law, and calls upon us while we are near, to reckon with us while it is hot: before we are gone out of hearing, as it were. I need not heap up Scripture-instances to this purpose: daily experience is sufficient evidence.

2. *What are the eructations of thy conscience?* Is there nothing, that Conscience doth begin to accuse thee of? that thou couldst wish had been done, or left to doing? When *David* had numbred the people, see how conscience did presently begin to work within him, *His heart smote him*, 2 *Sam.* 24. 10. What ever thou doest, take

takeheed of overlaying thy conſcience, or ſtifling the operations of it: If this lye ſpeechleſs in ſuch a caſe, it's a ſigne the diſeaſe is dangerous: when the Stomack is overcharged, either in Quantity or Quality, it loatheth the very thoughts of meat: but eſpecially of that, whereon it ſurfeited. *My Sin is ever before me*, ſaies *David*. *Pſal.* 51. 3. 'Tis true the ſin of his nature comes into his thoughts, as the root and ſpawn of all the reſt: but 'tis this particular guilt, that alwaies returns with its gaſhly and dreadful aggravations upon him.

3. *Sometimes the Puniſhment bears reſemblance with the Sin.* Suffering is the Off-ſpring of ſin; and oftentimes it begets children in its own likeneſs. God ſometimes deals with us *Lege Talionis*, and requiteth us *like for like*. So he dealt with *Agag*, 1 *Sam.* 15. 33. *As thy ſword hath made women childleſs, ſo ſhall thy mother be childleſs among women.* Such was that Judgment of God on thoſe *Sodomites* the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, *Rom.* 1. 27. *Receiving in themſelves that recompence of their errour which was meet.* He meted out a puniſhment, that ſhould ſuit with their impiety, and made their very ſin to be their ſnare. Thus he doth often, as it were, write our *accuſation* on our *croſs*, and cauſe the ſuffering to bear the very picture of the Sin. Nay, after this manner God dealt with *David* himſelf: When he began to glory in, or to truſt to, the multitude and ſtrength of his forces; God ſhortned them by *ſeventy thouſand men*. 2 *Sam.* 24. 15. So when he had ſinned by Adultery

dultery and Murder: Murder and Adultery was his puniſhment, 2 *Sam.* 12. 10, 11. Thus alſo *God* met with *Ahab*, 1 *King.* 21. 19. But to mention no more: this is one of the commoneſt and cleareſt Rules we have to judge by in this caſe. Hath God croſt thee in any of thy delights? Conſider whether thy delight were lawful in its ſelf and in its circumſtances, or the uſe of it, moderate and ſubordinate. Hath he ſmitten thee in ſome dear Relation? Conſider whether it had not too much of thine heart, or of thy time, thy care, or fond Indulgence. Hath he afflicted thee in any part of thy Body? Conſider how thy Body (or, it may be, that part eſpecially) hath been employed either to Gods honour or diſhonour. Haſt thou met with any fruſtration, danger, or evil ſucceſs in thy enterprize? Conſider what were thy ends. Of whom didſt thou ask counſel? or crave aſsiſtance? See whether there be not ſome offence near thee, of which thy puniſhment may claim parentage. The firſt Queſtion we uſe to ask the Patient is this, Where doth your pain lie? Wherein are you grieved moſt? And then examine, whether that part be not ſuffering under its own guilt. It may be thou art in a languiſhing, pining caſe, under ſom hereditary diſtemper, and haſt alwayes ſomthing to complain of. Why, may not *God* then be preſenting to thee the Condition of thy Soul by the eſtate of the body, and viſiting for the ſin of thy cnſtome or Conſtitution? When *God* enters into a Courſe of Phyſick with thee, its an Argument that the diſeaſe is rooted in thee,

thee, and let me add this as a ſure Rule, by the way. *Every Affliction hath a general, if not a ſpecial eye and aime at thy moſt beloved, habituated, or accuſtomed Sin.* Though particular miſcarriages be often times attended with particular corrections; yet both, it may be, are properly reducible unto thy maſter-Luſt, the ſin that doth ſo eaſily beſet thee, as the root of all: for one and the ſame ſin may diſcover its ſelf diverſe waies, that ſeem aliene from its own nature. For illuſtration take this plain example. A man that is naturally *Scorbutical*, and lies under the Phyſitians hands for that diſeaſe, but while this is under cure, he falls into a *Feaver*, or *Pluriſie*, or *Dropſie*, or the like; unto which the Phyſitian applies his art diverſly; yet in all he does, hath a due reſpect unto the former and great infirmity, which is as the fountain of the reſt, and creates him all this toyl, and variety of Methods and Compoſitions. Hence I conclude then, that he that is not acquainted with his Maſter-ſin, the King or Prince of his corruptions, is not like to go farr, with any ſucceſs or real advantage, in his ſearch.

4. *It may be God afflicts thee for prevention of a worſe evil. I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that ſhe ſhall not find her pathes. Hoſ. 2. 6.* God will ſet thorns in his ſheeps paths, to keep them from breaking from him. This was the courſe God took with St. *Paul. 2 Cor. 12. 7. Leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the*

the flesh: a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. God sees sometimes that prosperity would hurt us, ease and worldly contents would prove snares to us; and therefore in mercy he may deny or remove them. It may be, that God is fitting thee for some more than ordinary mercy, and laying the foundation for some fair building; if so, marvail not, nay, bethink it not if he digg deep in thee.

5. *Consider, what is thy Patience under the Rod*: An impatient high colour, and the thick and eager beating of the Pulse of thy complaints are the Symptoms of a Feaver, and gives cause to think that unbelief and impatience is, at least, an *Assistent*, if not the *Principal* cause. 'Tis an ordinary thing with God, to drive out one heat with another. Wonder not to see God setting his weak children on their leggs and teaching them to go, though they be froward and unwilling. He knowes that exercise is the way to beget and to strengthen habits. If thou wouldst that God should give over his afflicting, thou must learn to give over thy fretting. The quiet Patient is either the most hopeful, or the most desperate Patient.

pelluntur ignibus ignes.

6. *It may be Gods design is only or chiefly, for thy tryal.* To discover to thy self that which was hid, whether it be grace or corruption. Though sin be ever (at least) the remote cause of the Rod, yet it is not alway the main Cause; though it be *cum causâ*, yet not alway *in causâ*, *Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made mani-*

fest in him. Joh, 9. 3. Doubtless, both the man and his parents were sinners, both originally and actually; but that was not it, for which the man was born blind.

7. *Go and ask it of God by prayer.* No man in heaven nor in earth is able or worthy to open this Book, unless the *Lyon* of the tribe of *Judah* do it. Prayer is the Key to open these *Adyta Templi*, the secrets and Mysteries of the Spirit; the deep counsells of Providence. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdome and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his waies past finding out! For, who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counseller? Rom. 11. 33, 34.* O then! go out of thy self, and get up to the Mount with God. Prayer hath the Promise to quicken and encourage it. *Jam. 1. 5.* Spread thy case before him; bewail thy Ignorance to him; draw up thy affections to a resolved and practical submission to whatsoever he shall convince thee of; and conclude all with holy *Job, chap. 6. 24. Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred.*

Use 1. I come now to conclude all with a little Application. And I shall be very brief here, because the doctrinal part hath been mostly practical. Well Sirs! If the Lords Rod be no dumb Rod, and this be the voice and language of it, then,

1. This Informs us of a threefold Mistake.

1. They are mistaken, *that question Gods Providence. And they say, how doth God know,*

and

and is there knowledge in the most high? *Psal.* 73. 11. Nay, it seems that the Psalmist himself was almost ready to think so to. *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, ver.* 13. *Until I went into the Sanctuary of God, then understood I their end, ver.* 17. Which argues that he was mistaken before: till then, he understood not the mystery. He could not perceive those inner wheels, that secret Thred of Providence, which runs through all the transactions, counsells, estates and designs of men. And is not this almost your Case, my Brethren? that you are ready to say with that wicked *Messenger*, 2 *King.* 6.33. *This evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer!* Though you acknowledg the divine Providence in its *Esse*, yet know not how to subscribe or submit to it in its *Operari*. You see that it is the Lords doing, and it is not only mavellous: but grievous, as thorns in your eyes and hereupon the unbelieving, impatient heart is begetting and harbouring hard thoughts of God. Because you can't reach the other end of his unsearchable Counsells, are apt to censure his Care or his Power, as if he were a God that had forgotten to be gracious, or unable to deliver. *God hath forsaken him; persecute him, and take him: for there is none to deliver him,* *Psal.* 71. 11. What! is there none to deliver? Have you cut the *Reins* in Gods hand? Have you gotten the *Bridle* into your teeth? Will you indeed persecute and take him? Ay, but what if you be mistaken? What if the *Sampson* of your Confidence should but mock with you? what if the

divided Sea ſhould roul her waves together again? *But the ſalvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their ſtrength in the time of trouble. And the Lord ſhall help them, and deliver them: he ſhall deliver them from the wicked, and ſave them becauſe they truſt in him,* *Pſal.* 37.39,40.

2. They are miſtaken, *that transferr the cauſe of the Rod from themſelves.* When the guilt of ſin appears in the puniſhment of it; Nature it ſelf ſeems aſham'd to own it, Then *it is not I*, and *it is not I.* The *Woman* which thou gaveſt me, ſaies the man: the *Serpent*, ſaies the woman. Thou art he that troubleth *Iſrael*, ſaies *Ahab* to *Elijah: I have not troubled Iſrael*, ſaies *Elijah*, *but thou and thy Fathers houſe* (more likely indeed) *in that ye have forſaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou haſt followed Baalim,* 1 *King.* 18.17,18. Well Sirs! 'tis in vain to ſhuffle and collude with God and Conſcience. The Burden of *England* is very heavy: our wound is grievous and general; we are in a bleeding, ga ping, dying caſe; the whole Camp is diſquieted, for the judgments of God are among us, and the glory of *England* is departing: God will ſhortly diſcover where the fault lies; and who and what it is, that hath troubled us. 'Tis in vain to plead, *Not guilty* before God. *For all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the Glory of God.* *Rom.* 3.23. 'Tis true, there are thoſe that think themſelves without ſin, and at leaſt without any conſiderable guilt in this evil, and take up the *Stones* to caſt at us: But when once Conſcience

is

is awakened as theirs was, *Joh.* 8.9. they may begin to be aſhamed. The *Wiſeman* tells of a woman that *eateth, and wipeth her mouth and ſaith, I have done no wickedneſs*, *Pro.* 30. 20. and yet ſhe is convicted for an adulterous woman: Nay, it is given as the mark of an Adultereſs, ſo to do. God is not wont to cut his *Plaiſter* larger than the wound: the Rod will tell us where the guilt lies. Yet where the wound ſmarts moſt, there is moſt ſign of life and hope of a cure: that part that is moſt dangerouſly gangrenated is leaſt ſenſible, till it comes to cauteriſing or deciſion. Oh that God would convince *England* of her ſickneſs, and cauſe her to ſee her wound, before it become utterly incurable!

3. They are alſo miſtaken, *that apply themſelves to indirect means to be healed.* Good men as well as bad are ſometimes guilty in this kind: it was *Aſa's* ſin 2 *Chron.* 16. 12. - *In his diſeaſe he ſought not to the Lord, but to the Phyſitians. When Ephraim ſaw his ſickneſs, and Judah ſaw his wounds, then went Ephraim to the Aſſyrian, and ſent to King Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound, Hoſ.* 5.13. They ſaw onely the wound of their diſeaſe, not the cauſe of it; and this led them the wrong way to the cure: ſo, *Jer.* 44. 17, 18. *We will certainly do whatſoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incenſe to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our Kings and our Princes in the Cities of Judah, and in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem: For then had we plenty of victuals and were well, and ſaw no evil: but ſince we left off to burn incenſe to the Queen of Heaven, and to*

pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. Is not this the language and practice of the Generation of our daies? that measure their Religion by their Bellies, and would fain *build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.* We will return to our *Mass* and *Matins*, to our old Superstition and prophanness, for then we were well and saw no evil: but since there hath been so much preaching, and such strong light, such circumspect walking, and evidence of the spirit and power of godliness; we have wanted all things, at least that one thing we would have. Oh 'twere good daies when both Priest and People were agreed to fall into the *Ditch* together, when Sabbath-daies were daies of sport and recreation, and *Pardons* might be had through the hands of other Meditators, and within the price of a lust. But see what follows, *ver.* 21. *The incense ye that burnt in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye and your fathers, your Kings and your Princes and the people of the land, did not the Lord remember them, and came it not into his mind, so that the Lord could no longer bear because of the evil of your doings? Because ye have burnt incense, and because ye have sinned against the Lord, &c. therefore this evil is happened unto you as at this day, Jer.* 44.21. Is your return to the cause of your Plagues the rational course to prevent them? will a second draught of the same Poyson antidote the first? *The children of Israel have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord, they have set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name to pollute it, and they have built the high*

Mich. 3.10.

high places of Tophet. Their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men; while, with the old *Samaritans, they fear the Lord and serve their Idols.* They are gon with the Dog to his vomit: *Therefore, behold the daies come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the Son of Hinnom; but the valley of slaughter, Jer.* 7. 31, 32. When we turn Gods *Bethel* to a *Bethaven*, his house of Prayer to a den of Thieves: it will cause God to turn our *Hephzibah* into an *Aceldama*, a land of delights to a field of Blood. Till the true cause be discovered, acknowledged, and removed, we are farr enough from the cure. The nature of the cause might direct us to the means: If it be sin that hath made the wound; who shall heal it, but he that hath authority to forgive sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousnes? *For thus saith the Lord, thy bruise is uncurable, and thy wound is grievous, there is none to plead thy cause &c. All thy lovers have forsaken thee, they seek thee not, Jer.* 30. 12, &c. Thy wound is incurable with man; for few there are that understand, none that can remove it in its Cause or effects. Thy Lovers, thy Confederates, whose Assistance thou craveſt and dependest on, will prove but *Fig-leaves*, not *Shields* to thee. *For I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy.* Thou wilt find that these *Beds are shorter than that thou canst stretch thy self on them, and the Coverings narrower than that thou canst wrap thy self in them, Isa.* 28. 20. the Abomination of thy Prayers and Sacrifices will never reconcile that God that is in controversie with these thy Abominations. The multitude of thy Of-

ſerings will not remove, but aggravate the ſin of thine Oblations. There's nothing of thee, nothing in thee, nothing about thee, nothing above thee, but God that can help thee: and if ever he do it, be ſure he will do it in his own way, and on his own terms: thou muſt firſt compound with him and ſubmit to him. Oh! take heed of running to thy own witts, or righteouſneſs, of reſting on thy own duties, or innocency, or goodneſs of thy cauſe for help: Theſe are not, theſe will not be, thy Saviours.

Vſe 2 Suffer the word of Exhortation. You have heard that the Rod hath a Voice, and what this voice is: God hath been now a long time with various Comments and gloſſes expounding it to you. And now, my Brethren, I am come in the name of God, to drive home the *Nail* to the head, that I have bin all this while driving at. Oh that theſe laſt blows might do the work on you! that God may not take up the Hammer and drive a Jael's nail at your very heart, that I may leave it at laſt as nails faſtned by the *Eccl.* 12.11 Maſters of Aſſemblies. The ſpirit of God hath fram'd the exhortation in the text it ſelf, *Hear ye the Rod*; and I ſhall ſay no more, I can ſay no more, but to urge you with this *Dilemma*. Either you will hear, or elſe you will not hear. Now give me leave to tell you, and take it as ſome of my parting words, as thoſe that are not like to be called upon much longer. God is crying to you, Friends, for his packing penny; the eleventh hour is come, and ſome of his laſt meſſengers are ſent, for your laſt anſwer; refuſe but a little longer, and you ſhall never have the offer more. Oh! that our words and wiſhes and tears might now at laſt prevail with you!

1. If

1. If you will not hear the Rod in the voice of it, you ſhall ſurely feel the Rod in the vengeance and curſe of it. *Hear ye deaf, and look ye blind that ye may ſee; who is blind but my ſervant, and who is deaf as my Meſſenger that I ſent? Iſa.* 42.10. &c. *But this is a people robbed and ſpoyled; they are all of them ſnared in holes, and they are hid in priſon-houſes, they are for a prey and none delivereth, for a ſpoyl and none ſaith, Reſtore. Who among you will give ear to this? Who will hearken and hear for the time to come? ver.* 22.23. *Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the Strength of Battel, and it hath ſet him on fire round about, yet he knew it not, and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart, ver.* 25. Sinner! doſt thou think that God will leave thee thus? Hath he threatned thee, and ſhaken the Rod at thee, and ſhalt thou eſcape ſo? Hath he made all theſe dreadful preparations of wrath onely *in terrorem*, to affrighten thee? wilt thou once more try whether he be in earneſt or no? To thy ſorrow ſhalt thou try it and find it, when the irreverſible curſe of God hath faſtned on thee, when the Fire and Brimſtone of divine and unexpiable vengeance is ſmoaking about thine ears, thou ſhalt know that he was in earneſt. When God ſhall daſh the potts of thy higheſt Hopes and deareſt Comforts, in pieces; when the bitter dreggs of the Cup of trembling are at thy noſe and muſt paſs through thee: when thou ſhalt long for death, and curſe the day that ever thou wert born, then ſhalt thou know in whoſe hand the Rod is. *If ye will not hear theſe words, I ſwear by my ſelf, ſaith the Lord, that this Houſe ſhall become a deſolation, Jer.* 22.5. O hear this and tremble,

ble, thou that wilt not hear? God hath ſworn thy deſolation, and vow'd thy deſtruction. What ſhall I ſay? If thou art reſolv'd to run the *Risk* with God thou mayeſt. *Rejoyce, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the daies of thy youth, and walk in the waies of thine heart, and in the ſight of thine eyes: but know that for all theſe things God will bring thee into Judgement, Eccleſ.* 11.9. Thou may'ſt enjoy a merry day or two, it may be a few merry years more; but then, reſolve to bid thy joys farewell for ever! O that ſome ſuch thoughts as theſe might awaken thee before it be too late!

2. If you will thus hear the Rod, you may be ſure of ſtrength to bear it. *Encline your ear, & come unto me hear and your ſoul ſhall live, Iſa.* 55.3. What death ſoever threatens you; what dangers ſoever are impendent over you; whoſoever die, be ſure, you ſhall live. You ſhall live even in death its ſelf; for your Soul ſhall live. *There hath no temptation taken you,* ſaies the Apoſtle, and there ſhall no temptation take you, *but ſuch as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it,* 1 *Cor.* 10.13. When God ſees his children willing to obey to their utmoſt, he will never put them upon more than they ſhall be enabled to wade through with comfort. *Rejoyce not againſt me, o mine enemy when I fall I ſhall ariſe; when I ſit in darneſs, the Lord ſhall be a light unto me, Mic.* 7.8. What ſhall I ſay? All the comfort in the God of comfort is ingaged with thee: If thou art willing to take up thy Croſs, and to own thy duty under all its difficulties;

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he that hath called thee will bear thy Crosse for thee and, if that be too little, he will bear both thee and thy Burden too. 1 *Pet.* 5. 7. *Matth.* 11. 28.

In the next place, let this put you on the serious, speedy, and impartial search and examination, *Use 3.*

1. Of your *Ends* in desiring the removal of the Rod. Is not this your joynt-cry, and the common request of your Souls to God, that his blows may cease, and the bloody executioners of his wrath be called in? Now what are your *Ends*? Is your personal peace, the worldly credit of your own way, that which you aim at! that you may sit down under your own *Vines* and *Figtrees*, as you have done heretofore? do your ends reach onely to your own enjoyments, either spiritual or temporal? If so, you are yet short of that which is God's, and should be your, design. Christian, I cannot tell thee what lies at the bottom of thy heart, nor where thy ends are center'd; I can but propose these things to thy Conscience, and leave it there to be examined between God and thy own Soul. The end of all divine actions and providences with relation to God himself is the fuller and more convincing manifestation of the glory of all his Attributes, wherein he is wont to make himself known to his creatures, with relation to us; it is to accomplish his revealed will, which is our *Sanctification*. Wherefore these designes of God, whom we are bound to imitate in all things imitable, should be our Rule, both to direct and discern our ends by.

But you may say: Why, we are content to ly as low as God would have us to ly: to become any thing that God may have glorie by us, We hope, we aim *Obj.*

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at nothing more than the advancement of that great End?

Answ. You say, You are contented to lye at Gods feeet? But let me ask thy heart now, Is it not, because thou must be there, and canst not help it? God hath cast thee down, but sore against thy will: wouldst thou ever have *taken up* this cross, had not God necessitated thee and even forc't it on thee? Brethren, I would not be mistaken here: I have already declar'd my mind in this case, before. There is nothing in the *Cross* it self, that can render it desireable or eligible for it self: but if *Christ* be there, the Case is alter'd. *If he be lifted up, he shall draw all men to him.* The Cross is then *thy* Cross, and thy duty lies in it: and certainly, Duty is desireable, on the same account that Idleness is detestable. Nay, what ever it be that God hath plac't thy duty in, it is desireable for thy duties sake. A true Souldier had as liev fight the Battel, being called to it, as to divide the Spoyl: and yet is not fool-hardie, to rush on dangers, without a Commission. *These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth* *Rev.* 14.4. They are not dragged at his heels, but they follow him. A Christians will should hang in *Æquilibrio*, with an indeterminable promptness and readiness to any thing that shall from God be discovered to be his duty. Now, can you *rejoyce in tribulation*? May I ask you then, whence it comes to pass? Is it from the *Comfort* you find in it? Can you say, you are at hearts content even in the Furnace, because you are there with Christ? or is it from the *Good* you get by it? can you say, that you never wrought merrier than in those golden Mines, where you

Joh. 12. 32.

you are ever and anon fainting and ready to leave your lives under your Burdens? or is it from the *Equity* you perceive in it? do you resolve, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him.* Mich. 7. 9. If this be the temper of your hearts, let him alone to take it off, that laid it on: and though what ever God doth in the world, he is wont to do by means, yet take heed of prescribing means to him whose Prerogative it is to elect his owne means, and then to commissionate and impower them. Examine what good the Rod hath wrought on you: either the voice of it, or the stroaks of it. Have you been humbled and reformed by what you have seen and suffered? Have you been instructed, resolved, and strengthned by what you have read or heard? Hath God been at all these pains about you in vain? Hath he been knocking on *Anvils*, and I beating the air? God hath not chastized you with dumb Blows, but hath reasoned the case with you. Oh my Brethren, where's the print of Gods Seal on you? have you been softned to receive the impression? *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest him out of thy law, Psal.* 94. 12. This is the *Blessed* course that God hath taken with you; oh! where's the *Blessed* effect it hath wrought on you! As sure as your Souls shall rise at the Judgment, these things shall rise with you, either to your comfort or your condemnation. And now that I am about to shut up all, and to conclude my important Errand to you, O let me not leave it in your Napkins, in your Papers, in your Heads, or in your Mouths onely; but in your hearts and lives! It grieves my soul to think that I should bestow so much of my time and labour to aggravate the

the Damnation of any of you. O that I knew how, or were able to prevent it! Dearly beloved in the Lord! though my meſſage to you be drawing to a Period, yet my heart is ever full towards you. I know not how to leave you, for fear I should leave any of you short of my end and deſire. Oh that I could intruſt a Token with you to remember God, your ſouls and your Duty by, as long as you live! What Duty, what Sin have you been convinc't of? what ſearch have you made, and what have you found? Have we been fiſhing, not onely all night, but all this year, and caught nothing? What ſpiritual weapon, what experience, what courage, what victory, what grace have you gotten or ſtrengthned? oh ſit down and ſhake your *Netts*; ſee what you have gotten. Shall afflictions from henceforth find you as naked, and leave you as unreform'd and unreſolv'd, as if you had never heard a word of the nature or uſe of them? Ah my Brethren! theſe are the things you have adventured hard for, that you have hazzarded, and it may loſt ſomthing for, and have you gotten nothing to make it up again? Take this from me, You will never adventure all at ſuch a rate; ſuch marchandizing will certainly beggar your Profeſsion.

Ye 4. Laſtly, this affords us matter of ſaddeſt Lamentation, and that on theſe three Accounts.

1. That we ſhould provoke God thus to deal with us. We, the People of ſuch mercies and deliverances whom *God* hath ſo highly honour'd and made the head and not the tail of the Nations; whoſe part he hath taken againſt all the world, and manifeſted his high account of us in the face of our enemies. Surely any Nation under Heaven might better have done it than *England*. *You onely have known of all the*

Families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities, *Am.* 3. 2. Is it a ſmall offence that hath drawn out ſuch a Flood of wrath? Oh let us ſit down and weep here! we that even now were ſitting among the Lillies are now toſt and torn among the thorns and briers. Our peace is broken both with *God* and Man; our health and plenty is declining like a Shadow; we are ſore broken as in the place of Dragons. *O that my head were waters! and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the ſlain of the daughter of my people! O that I had in the wilderneſs a lodging place of waifaring men! that I might leave my people and go from them. For they be all Adulterers an Aſſembly of treacherous men!* *Jer.* 9. 12.

2. That we are no more ſenſible of the Rod, nor bettered by it. This is the ſaddeſt judgment on this ſide Hell, to be given up to a hard heart, a ſpiritual Lethargy; When Calls and Promiſes and Threatnings and Judgments will not work, he hath but one way more, as to viſible means, to make work with a People: Ruine and Deſolation will make work, but ſad work! Hell and damnation will make work with the ſtubbornſt heart that ever ſinned againſt *God*. Ah ſinner! there is a Rod that will awaken thee; there are arrows that will pierce thee; there are flames that will warm thee; there are Fiends that wil ſurely daunt thee, and chains that ſhall bind thee to all eternity; there's a Diſcipline that ſhall tame thee, as mad and as wild as thou art.

3. Laſtly, lament your poor Poſterities, who are like to inherit the curſe of our backſlidings. Methink it is a dreadful Text, *Am.* 4. 2. *The Lord God hath*

[illegible] by his holiness, and lo, the daies shall come upon you that he will take you away with hooks, and your Posterity with fish-hooks. God is like to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation. How may the generations to come arise and curse us for sinning away both the spiritual and temporal Priviledges they should have enjoyed after us. God seems to threaten us as *David* devoteth his enemies. *Psal.* 109.10. *Let his children be continually vagabounds and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.* Oh Sirs! if your children are dear to you, consult their peace and welfare: Provide the blessing, not the Curse, for their Portion that God may yet say of us as once of *Israel*, *Jer.* 31. 17. *And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border.* Even so Lord! Amen, and Amen!

A Postscript to the Readers.

Sirs,

IF any thing in these Sheets seem to be born out of due time; know, that they have had a hard *Travail*. They were at first prepared for 1665; but, through the astonishing difficulty of our late *Junctures*, the Author's unbefriended *Obscurity*, and want of those *Minerval* Powers, which are now become essentially requisite in such cases, they have lingered hitherto.

And though some of those Judgments are come and past, which the warnings of this *Voice* related to (which also are inserted here in their bare mention, on some late review); yet I hope the main design of it is not frustrate, nor rendred unseasonable; yea, rather let what hath been already accomplished strengthen your Faith and open your eyes to see what may be yet behind. Though one *Wo* be past, may there not come *two Woes* more hereafter: *For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.* God hath not yet done with us, nor will he leave us thus: Nay, both Friends and Enemies shall be brought to another *Passe*. before he sheath up that sword he hath drawn out against us. His work is on the *Wheel*, and he will finish it; *The Wheel* whirles a pace, and *a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.*

Sapite, Valete.

FINIS.

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